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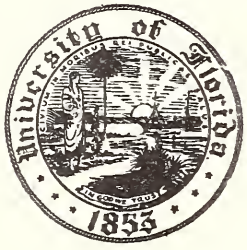

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
HIS LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

HIS LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE

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"A man of uncommon genius is a man of high passions and lofty design."—WILLIAM GODWIN

VOLUME TWO

New York
RUSSELL & RUSSELL
1960

Reprinted, 1960, Russell & Russell, Inc.,
by arrangement with John Murray Ltd., London
who published the original edition in 1929

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 60–11020

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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CHAPTER XIII

GRASMERE AND THE LAKES

The reader may have been struck more than once in this recital with the long visits Wordsworth made at the houses of his friends. There must have been something peculiarly engaging in his person and his conversation, or he would not have been so often invited to spend weeks and even months with people upon whom he had no claim of kinship. His needs were simple, his habits accommodating, and he spent much of his time out of doors. We have also to remember that the eighteenth century was more leisurely than our own time, and that, owing to the lack of facilities for rapid travel, well-to-do families living at a distance from great centres might often say with truth that the advantage of entertaining was theirs. Guests broke the monotony, and gave young men and women a chance to see someone besides their own relatives. The Hutchinsons, with whom William and Dorothy Wordsworth made their home for nearly eight months in 1799, at Sockburn, were certainly not more than well-to-do, and it is quite possible that the guests, in this case, paid for board and lodging. The family consisted of three brothers—Henry, a sailor; Thomas, a farmer, about twenty-six years old; and George—and three sisters—Mary, Sarah, and Joanna, aged respectively twenty-eight, twenty-four, and nineteen. They had spent part of their childhood at Penrith, where the acquaintance with the Wordsworths had begun. Thomas, at the age of sixteen, had inherited the stock on a farm at Sockburn, which is in the county of Durham, near the border of Yorkshire, about seven miles south of Darlington. He now rented this farm, and his sisters lived with him there. It was a pleasant place, on the banks of the

River Tees. The young people were nearly of an age. They had known one another from childhood. Mary Hutchinson, as we have seen, had gone to visit Dorothy Wordsworth at Racedown—a long and tedious journey.

There are few traces in his poems of Wordsworth's life at Sockburn. Nearly all the short pieces which he dated 1799 were composed before he left Germany. The Bishop of Lincoln quotes two letters from Coleridge,* which show that Wordsworth had already communicated to his friend the great plan which now filled his mind. Coleridge was to be addressed in a poem. But there was to be another and greater poem, a life-work, a masterpiece, and with characteristic self-forgetfulness, he entreats Wordsworth to attend chiefly to this task. The first of these letters is of the utmost importance, as being perhaps the seed from which grew more than one book of "The Excursion," and as defining Coleridge's state of mind, and perhaps Wordsworth's too, with reference to what we may term the Revolutionary faith. This letter is said to have been addressed to Wordsworth in the summer of 1799. It says:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I do entreat you to go on with 'The Recluse'; and I wish you would write a poem in blank verse, addressed to those, who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have thrown up all hopes of the amelioration of mankind, and are sinking into an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft titles of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary *philosophes*. It would do great good, and might form a part of 'The Recluse,' for in my present mood I am wholly against the publication of any small poems."

This is not the language of a man who has himself given up striving for his old ideals, and we know what they were. And this we may hold, notwithstanding a manuscript Discourse by Coleridge, now in the British

* "Memoirs," I. 159. There is, besides, a letter from Coleridge to Poole, in the British Museum, written at Exeter, September 10, 1799, in which Coleridge says: "I have heard from W. Wordsworth. He is ill, and seems not happy. Montague has played the fool, I expect, with him in pecuniary affairs. He renounces Alfoxden altogether."

Museum, in which he criticizes the Godwinian theories, though without naming their author. He denounces naked reason and exalts the affections, and speaks of "infidelity and its almost inseparable concomitant, relaxation of domestic ties," quite in the vein of pulpit thunderers. But the real nature of the discourse is shown by the superscription: "Written for whom I neither know or care, as a College Commemoration Sermon, Oct. 6, 1799." It was evidently composed for sale to some not very scrupulous clergyman. Under date of October 8, 1799, at Stowey, the ingenious author has added, below the title, that though one side is "all too hugely beangel'd, the other all too desperately bedevil'd, yet spite of the flattery and spite of the caricature, both are likenesses."

In the second letter, dated October 12, Coleridge says:

"I long to see what you have been doing. O let it be the tail-piece of 'The Recluse!' for of nothing but 'The Recluse' can I hear patiently. That it is to be addressed to me makes me more desirous that it should not be a poem of itself. To be addressed, as a beloved man, by a thinker, at the close of such a poem as 'The Recluse,' a poem *non unius populi*, is the only event, I believe, capable of inciting in me an hour's vanity—vanity, nay, it is too good a feeling to be so called; it would indeed be a self-elevation produced *ab extra*."

Coleridge had evidently not yet seen even the beginning of "The Prelude," and thought of it as a slight undertaking compared with "The Recluse"—as a sort of dedication to himself of that larger work. Wordsworth, we may suppose from these incitements, was going on with the task he had begun to plan in Germany, writing "The Prelude," and looking ahead to what afterwards he called "The Excursion."

In a letter dated September 2 he invited Cottle to join him in the north, and accompany him on a tour, which was to include the curiosities in the neighbourhood of Sockburn, and then Cumberland and Westmorland. By curiosities he means natural objects of interest. As at Orleans what he thought most worthy of

record was a bubbling spring, so here, he cared more for waterfalls, gorges, peaks, and dales, than for the works of man. Coleridge had come back from Germany in July, and the visit was deferred until he could be of the party. He was in poor health, suffering terribly from rheumatism, sleeplessness, and indigestion, and probably aggravating these evils with opium. The problem of supporting his family was crying for solution. He naturally went first to Stowey, not only to comfort his wife, but to receive comfort himself from the ever-helpful Poole. Here he and Southey patched up their broken friendship. Towards the end of August the Coleridges went to Ottery St. Mary, where old Mrs. Coleridge and her son George, a clergyman, were living. In October Coleridge turned up in Bristol, and induced Cottle to accompany him to the north to see Wordsworth. They arrived at Sockburn on October 26.

In a letter from Wordsworth to his sister, we have a summary account of the journey taken by the young men. Cottle dropped out at Greta Bridge, before they were fairly started. John Wordsworth took his place, at Temple Sowerby. The party then, entering the Lake country at Bampton, proceeded along Hawes Water, and crossed the mountains to Windermere, by way of Long Sleddale and Troutbeck. They went over to Hawkshead. The brothers noticed great changes among the people since they had left the region. It was Coleridge's first visit. Next day they went through Rydal to Grasmere, where they remained a few days. John left them almost immediately. They climbed with him to the top of Grisedale Pass, and said farewell in sight of Ullswater. "Coleridge," says William, "was much struck with Grasmere and its neighbourhood. I have much to say to you. You will think my plan a mad one, but I have thought of building a house there by the lake side. John will give me £40 to buy the ground. There is a small house at Grasmere empty, which, perhaps, we may take; but of this we will speak." The two poets lingered in these lovely places until November 15 at least.

On the 10th, writing to Southey from Keswick, Coleridge says: " I was called up to the North by alarming accounts of Wordsworth's health, which, thank God, are but little more than alarms." He states further that he intends to return thence to London, having received by accident, in the Lake country, " a sort of offer of an agreeable kind," which will enable him and his wife to live in London four or five months. This was a proposal from Daniel Stuart to write political articles for *The Morning Post.* He first returned, however, to Sockburn, and went thence by coach to London, arriving November 27.

Wordsworth seems to have remained longer in the Lake country, for, writing to Coleridge several weeks later, he says: " I arrived at Sockburn the day after you quitted it. I scarcely know whether to be sorry or not that you were no longer there, as it would have been a great pain to me to have parted with you. I was sadly disappointed in not finding Dorothy. Mary was a solitary housekeeper and overjoyed to see me."

Wordsworth and Coleridge spent nearly a month together, on this tour, in the closest intercourse, renewing their old love and rekindling the flame of poetic inspiration, which, in Wordsworth's case at least, was soon to glow more brightly than ever. It was one more of those epochs of his life, like the old Alfoxden days, when his heart grew strong with faith in his own powers, and his mind opened to fresh influences. He was subject to great physical and mental depression; composition exhausted him; the physical act of writing made him ill; if left long to himself, he doubted his own powers. Many of the poems he composed during that lonely winter in Germany have a strange inwardness, approaching melancholy. On his return he betrayed undue concern about the success of " Lyrical Ballads," amounting almost to petulance. There is evidence that he was distressed for want of money. Basil Montagu appears to have been remiss in paying for his son's expenses.

All these clouds were blown away when Coleridge burst upon him like a riotous wind. His courage re-

vived. He took a larger view of his future tasks. When alone with Dorothy, he observed and penetrated the minute particulars of nature. With Coleridge to stimulate his synthetic powers, he saw things in their connection with one another. Even had it not been Coleridge, with his iridescent imagination, but only some ordinary disciple of Kant, the contact would have been invigorating, for analysis had gone to an almost perilous length, and the time had come when a fresh speculative impulse was needed, a fresh impulse to synthesize, to view nature and mind under the aspect of their eternal coexistence.

It must have given him great satisfaction to draw together so many of the best influences of his past life. First there was the group at Sockburn; then, with his best friend at his side, he listened once more to the voices of the hills. Coleridge, too, heard these voices with a sympathetic ear. He wrote to Dorothy from Keswick:

"You can feel, what I cannot express for myself, how deeply I have been impressed by a world of scenery absolutely new to me. At Rydal and Grasmere I received, I think, the deepest delight; yet Haweswater, through many a varying view, kept my eyes dim with tears; and, the evening approaching, Derwent-water in diversity of harmonious features, in the majesty of its beauties, and in the beauty of its majesty . . . and the black crags close under the snowy mountains, whose snows were pinkish with the setting sun, and the reflections from the rich clouds that floated over some and rested upon others!—it was to me a vision of a fair country: why were you not with us?"

And of John Wordsworth, the sailor brother, he wrote: "Your brother John is one of you; a man who hath solitary usings of his own intellect, deep in feeling, with a subtle tact, a swift instinct of truth and beauty: he interests me much."

Having made the happy choice of a home at Grasmere, Wordsworth and his sister remained only about three weeks longer at Sockburn. They set out for their new abode on December 17, and reached Grasmere on the 20th, sleeping on the way at Askrigg, Sedbergh, and

Kendal. Starting early in the morning, and crossing the Tees in the Sockburn fields by moonlight, they travelled as far as Wensley Dale on horseback, Dorothy mounted "behind George." They rode ten miles to the River Swale, four more to Richmond, and eight more into Wensley Dale, where they parted from their friends with sorrowful hearts. Thence they proceeded on foot to Askrigg, twelve miles, which they reached before six o'clock in the evening. The rough, frozen roads hurt their feet, but the keen air refreshed their spirits, and they were able to walk twenty-one miles next day, with the help of a "lift" in a cart. Notwithstanding a furious wind and snow, they turned aside to see several waterfalls. From Askrigg to Sedbergh they flew before the gale at a rapid pace. Next morning they climbed uphill and down, eleven miles, to Kendal, where they spent the afternoon buying and ordering furniture. On the fourth day, in a post-chaise, they proceeded less lightly to Grasmere. In the fragment of "The Recluse," written a year or two later, the poet thus describes the arrival:

> Bleak season was it, turbulent and bleak,
> When hitherward we journeyed, side by side,
> Through bursts of sunshine and through flying showers,
> Paced the long Vales—how long they were—and yet
> How fast that length of way was left behind,
> Wensley's rich Vale and Sedbergh's naked heights.
> The frosty wind, as if to make amends
> For its keen breath, was aiding to our steps,
> And drove us onward like two ships at sea,
> Or like two birds, companions in mid air,
> Parted and reunited by the blast.
> Stern was the face of Nature. We rejoiced
> In that stern countenance, for our souls thence drew
> A feeling of their strength. The naked trees,
> The icy brooks, as on we passed, appeared
> To question us. "Whence come ye ? to what end ?"
> They seemed to say; "What would ye," said the shower,
> "Wild wanderers, whither through my dark domain ?"
> The sunbeam said, "Be happy." When this Vale
> We entered, bright and solemn was the sky
> That faced us with a passionate welcoming,
> And led us to our threshold.

Travel-stained and footsore, but full of joy at the new prospect opening before them, this young man and this young woman, whether they realized it or not, were come at last to the haven where they would be. At Grasmere and in its neighbourhood they were to spend the rest of their days. Henceforth they were nevermore to be separated. Here, in perfect union of effort, they were to live according to their ideal. Peace, contentment, unforced and fruitful labour, were to be their portion. Their lives up to this point had not been unfortunate, but they had suffered much anxiety, and William, at least, was one of those who bore the burden of the century at heart. They had wandered far, in body and in spirit, and not the least of their new advantages was being at home again among their native hills. Their genius dedicated them peculiarly to the study and love of nature. That "thrifty goddess" reveals herself at her own chosen moments, and must be waited for and waylaid. Restless and wandering lovers miss her disclosures. At Grasmere, William and Dorothy Wordsworth could at once begin again the life of observation and emotion which in his case at least had been so full during childhood and youth. They were within one long day's walk of Cockermouth, where they were born, and at an equal distance from Penrith. An easy ramble of three hours would bring them to Hawkshead. The familiar rustic speech of the northwest would be heard again, made noticeable and yet endeared by absence. The local types of face and figure, local customs, local traditions, would stir the heart with tender memories, and at the same time yield fresh meaning, after years spent elsewhere.*

The house that Wordsworth had rented was a small stone-and-plaster cottage several hundred feet back

* In a letter to Poole, preserved in the British Museum, Coleridge about this time says: "I would to God I could get Wordsworth to retake Alfoxden. The society of so great a being is of priceless value; but he will never quit the North of England. His habits are more assimilated with the inhabitants there; there he and his sister are exceedingly beloved, enthusiastically. Such differences do small sympathies make, such as voice, pronunciation, etc."

from the north-east shore of Grasmere Lake.* It had an unobstructed view of the water, and of Silver How and Loughrigg Fell beyond. Before it ran the old road that connected Grasmere village and Ambleside. Immediately behind it rose the first slopes of Rydal Fell, which is a spur of mighty Fairfield. Along the margin of the lake, on the one hand, extended a large grove of oak-trees; on the other, a few level enclosures of meadow-land stretched for somewhat less than half a mile to the ancient church and the first dwellings of the village. The cottage was rough-cast with white lime, and gleamed hospitably upon the sight of a traveller approaching it from Kendal and Windermere. It had formerly been an inn, The Dove and Olive Branch, and is now known as Dove Cottage. The Wordsworths, however, spoke of it for some years as Town-end, which was the local name. It was even smaller than at present. De Quincey describes the interior as he saw it in 1807:

"A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen long, and twelve broad; very prettily wainscoted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was—a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered at almost every season of the year with roses, and in the summer and autumn with a profusion of jasmine and other fragrant shrubs. . . . I was ushered up a little flight of stairs, fourteen in all, to a little drawing-room, or whatever the reader chooses to call it. Wordsworth himself has described the fireplace of this room as his

Half-kitchen and half-parlour fire.

It was not fully seven feet six inches high, and, in other respects, pretty nearly of the same dimensions as the rustic hall below. There was, however, in a small recess, a library of perhaps three hundred volumes, which seemed to consecrate the room as the poet's study and composing room; and such occasionally it was."

* According to a manuscript note by Dr. Joseph Hunter, in the British Museum, the rental was £8 a year.

Besides these two fair-sized rooms, which looked towards the highway and the lake, there were, on the ground-floor, a bedroom and a little dark kitchen or laundry, and on the upper floor one or two bedrooms, and a diminutive study or sitting-room. There were a few feet of ground in front, between the cottage and the road. At the back was a steep little orchard. Between its piled rocks a few apple-trees shaded a tiny spring. Shrubs and flowers growing at the higher end of the orchard laughed in at the upper windows of the cottage, so small was the space and so sharp the pitch of the ground. Beyond the back wall rose the mountain, and one might continue in a straight line for half a day without encountering any other habitation. For those who have never been in the Lake country, it may not be amiss to say that the valleys are very small, seldom more than a few fields across, and carefully cultivated, while the mountains that divide them are high in comparison, their lower slopes often richly wooded, their upper flanks generally bare of trees, and covered with close elastic turf, while their summits are composed of jagged rocks. More than a score of lovely lakes and romantic tarns lie bosomed in the vales or set like jewels among the hills. The entire region is so small that from Grasmere as a centre a good walker can reach any point on its circumference in a day. Yet it is so diversified and so full of exquisite detail, that a lifetime would not suffice to acquaint a person with all its natural beauties. These are in no small measure due to the enormous rainfall, which keeps the water-courses shouting all the year round, and causes grass and moss to clothe every rock and tree-trunk with verdure.

The influx of tourists had just begun, and was not very large. Only a small part of the population was as yet composed of wealthy retired families. Grasmere itself was a scattered group of humble cottages. There were almost none beside the lake except Wordsworth's. In deeper seclusion in the valley heads, such as Easedale and Langdale, folk still lived oblivious of the outer

world, preserving ancient manners and forms of speech. On all the long stretch of road, seventeen miles or so, between Ambleside and Keswick, there appear to have been at first only two or three households with whom the new-comers could associate on something like an equal footing in the matter of education. But they probably did not consider this a drawback. The dalesmen were a respectable, intelligent, neighbourly race; the state of society was wholesome; there were other planes of intercourse no less inviting than those afforded by learning and polite convention.

At first the new inhabitants of Town-end, or Dove Cottage, probably lived more simply than even they had ever done before. They had few possessions; it was no easy matter to go to Kendal or Penrith for supplies; of money they had at this juncture almost none. Yet on Christmas Eve Wordsworth sat down, in a most cheerful frame of mind, and wrote a long letter to Coleridge. The house, he said, was almost empty, but they hoped to make it comfortable. They had caught colds, to be sure, and the chimneys drew badly, but there was compensation in planning for next spring. His sister was especially pleased with the orchard: " In imagination she has already built a seat, with a summer shed, on the highest platform in this our little domestic slip of mountain. The spot commands a view, over our house, of the lake, the church, Helmcrag, and two-thirds of the vale." He intends to enclose the two or three yards of ground between the house and the road, and to plant flowers there. " Am I fanciful," he asks, " when I would extend the obligation of gratitude to insensate things? May not a man have a solitary pleasure in doing something gratuitously for the sake of his house, as for an individual to which he owes so much?" They intend to keep no servant, but have engaged a woman to do some of the housework by the day. He says they have found the people in the neighbouring cottages " uniformly kind-hearted, frank, and manly, prompt to serve, without servility." He hopes for skating on Rydal Water, and has begun the com-

position of a new poem, on some subject already discussed with Coleridge.

The year 1800 was one of the most prolific of all Wordsworth's years. In it he probably finished and dictated to Dorothy the first and second books of "The Prelude," besides composing that great fragment of "The Recluse," which was not published in full until 1888, and many other poems, inspired by his new surroundings, among them "The Brothers," "Michael," and "The Pet Lamb." It is pleasant to observe that he, who had been the recipient of much hospitality, proved hospitable himself as soon as he had a home to offer to his kindred and friends. His brother John, the sailor, spent a large part of this year with him. Coleridge, too, was more than once a guest at Dove Cottage in 1800. He had gone, as we have seen, from Sockburn to London, where he arrived November 27, and settled with his family. For nearly three months he wrote for Stuart's paper, *The Morning Post.* He then gave up his engagement, in order to work at his translation of Schiller's "Wallenstein." In February Mrs. Coleridge and their son Hartley left London, and Coleridge spent a month, perhaps two months, with the Lambs. From their house Coleridge wrote to Poole, in March: "Certainly no one, neither you or the Wedgwoods, although you far more than anyone else, ever entered into the feelings due to a man like Wordsworth, of whom I do not hesitate in saying that, since Milton, no one has *manifested* himself equal to him."

He wrote to Josiah Wedgwood, on April 21, from Dove Cottage again: "To-morrow morning I send off the last sheet of my irksome, soul-wearying labour, the translation of Schiller"; and on May 21 he wrote from Poole's house to Godwin: "I left Wordsworth on the 4th of this month; if I cannot procure a suitable house at Stowey, I return to Cumberland and settle at Keswick." Campbell states that no house being procurable at Stowey, Coleridge "took his wife and child to Dove Cottage," where they all remained "from the 29th June until the 24th July, when they moved into Great

Hall," at Keswick. During part of this visit Coleridge was ill, with what he described as rheumatic fever, but notwithstanding every disability, he was again braced by contact with Wordsworth. It was comparatively easy for him to begin great undertakings anywhere; under Wordsworth's influence he sometimes brought them to a successful conclusion. In September, 1800, he wrote to Humphry Davy (?) from Keswick: "I abandon poetry altogether. I leave the higher and deeper kinds to Wordsworth, the delightful, popular, and simply dignified to Southey, and reserve for myself the honourable attempt to make others feel and understand their writings, as they deserve to be felt and understood."

It was an occasion of reverent delight when Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, the poet's grandson, placed in my hand the little account-books which contain Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal. She is to me the most delightful, the most fascinating woman who has enriched literary history. Poetry owes to her more than it owes to any other person who was not actually a great poet. Had Petrarch not met Laura, he might, one feels, have sung another woman's praise. We shall never know how much of Dante's Beatrice was pure abstraction. Dorothy Wordsworth was to her brother not only an inspiration, but a helper in many ways. Her love and solicitude followed everywhere the hesitating steps of Coleridge, and what she was to him one can hardly venture to surmise. Her Grasmere Journal is full of incomplete poetry, the star-dust of poetry still unpolarized, pollen of the flowering fields, a something midway between daily experience and immortal art. The first entry is dated May 14, 1800. It is evident from the very first page that the idyll of Racedown and Alfoxden still goes on unbroken, the same enthusiastic devotion to her brother, the same exact and loving study of nature, the same sense of being in a fresh, wonderful world. Yet a shadow appears to have fallen across her happy spirit, causing tears, but no complaints. She begins to write on a day when William has left her to return to Mary Hutchinson in Yorkshire. She is too

brave to make a confidant even of her diary, but loneliness no doubt drove her to write: "Wm. and John set off into Yorkshire. . . . My heart was so full that I could hardly speak to W. when I gave him a farewell kiss. I sate a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, and after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me, I knew not why, dull and melancholy, and the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound. . . . The valley very green; many sweet views up to Rydale, when I could juggle away the fine houses; but they disturbed me, even more than when I have been happier. . . . I resolved to write a journal of the time, till W. and J. return, and I set about keeping my resolve, because I will not quarrel with myself, and because I shall give William pleasure by it when he comes home again. . . . Oh, that I had a letter from William!"

The next day she writes, after a solitary ramble round the lake, at the foot of Loughrigg Fell: "Grasmere very solemn in the last glimpse of twilight. It calls home the heart to quietness. I had been very melancholy. In my walk back I had many of my saddest thoughts, and I could not keep the tears within me. But when I came to Grasmere, I felt that it did me good. I finished my letter to M. H."—*i.e.*, to Mary Hutchinson. *It calls home the heart to quietness.* Was not she, too, a poet?

Within the next few days she read several plays of Shakespeare and some ballads, worked busily in house and garden, listened sympathetically to tales of woe from poor travellers, watched closely the varying stages of the season, and, above all, waited for letters. Her walks never took her far from the cottage, especially as the time drew near when William might possibly return. She would rather sacrifice the glory of the long summer twilights than fail to be at home to greet him if he came unannounced. She wrote to her brothers Christopher and William, to the Hutchinsons, to Coleridge, to Charles Lloyd. She fell in love with the lower end of Easedale and the rocky knoll of Butterlip How, and spent much

time sitting there and on the slopes beside Rydal Water. Once, upon the side of Loughrigg, her heart, she says, dissolved in what she saw. On Wednesday, June 4, 1800, she writes: "I lingered out of doors in the hope of hearing my brother's tread." On Friday, hurrying home at night from the post-office at Ambleside, "I slackened my pace," she says, "as I came near home, fearing to hear that he was not come. I listened till after one o'clock to every barking dog." Next day: "I did not leave home, in the expectation of Wm. and John, and sitting at work till after 11 o'clock I heard a foot at the front of the house, turn round, and open the gate. It was William! After our first joy was over we got some tea. We did not go to bed till 4 o'clock in the morning, so he had an opportunity of seeing our improvements."

Perhaps it was during this absence that Wordsworth became engaged to Mary Hutchinson, though the subject is never directly mentioned. Coleridge had been more or less expected for some time, and the uncertainty continued till June 29. John Wordsworth came home a day later than William. We hear no more of sadness. It is refreshing to read of the poet fishing, setting pike floats, and cutting down a tree, and notable indeed is the information that "Wm. stuck peas." The nebular stuff of a poem is in Dorothy's elaborate account of "a very tall woman, tall much beyond the measure of tall women," whose children begged and told a lie, and whom she saw again, "creeping with a beggar's complaining foot." It is evident she is treasuring up all the details of the story and all the effective terms of speech that occur to her, as material for a poem, and nearly two years later, when her brother wrote "Beggars," he used this material. Such culled terms as "the whining voice of sorrow" and "creeping with a beggar's complaining foot" show that she had lately been reading the old dramatists, and are evidences of an effort on her part; but generally the charm of her phrases springs from their simplicity. The deep calm of her happiness sometimes changed to a more tumultuous joy, an ecstasy

of feeling. This she nearly always condensed into a sentence or two; for example, "Grasmere looked so beautiful that my heart was almost melted away."

But her usefulness to her brother was not limited to the higher offices of comforter, counsellor, provider, and critic. She had already begun her lifelong occupation of copying his poems. The ordinary domestic cares—housekeeping, cooking, mending, papering rooms, gardening, etc.—sat lightly on her. What there was to do she did, but had plenty of time to spare for reading and walking. Seven months slipped away before they unpacked their "Somersetshire goods."

At the end of July, Coleridge came over from Keswick for a short visit, bringing the second volume of Southey's "Annual Anthology," which contained a number of his own poems. He had been able to keep away just one week. The men went to bathe, and afterwards they all sailed on the lake, letting the boat take its own course while they read poetry. Wordsworth appears to have been stimulated by the presence of Coleridge to finish "The Brothers," one of the most ambitious poems he had hitherto written, and one which most daringly exemplifies his own theories. It was his habit, as is well known, to compose while walking in the open air, and he retained hundreds of lines in his mind, often for many weeks, before they were completed. On Friday, August 1, the day after Coleridge came, Dorothy writes: "In the morning I copied The Brothers. Coleridge and Wm. went down to the lake. They returned, and we all went together to Mary Point [so named in honour of Mary Hutchinson], where we sate in the breeze, and the shade, and read Wm.'s poems. Altered The Whirlblast, etc. We drank tea in the orchard." How young Wordsworth was, to have written such a poem as "The Brothers"!

Wordsworth seems to have returned to Keswick the next day with Coleridge, and to have stayed there till the 6th, the supplies at Greta Hall being meanwhile enriched by a large basket of peas sent over by the anxious sister. William had not been at home again

for more than two days when they both walked over the mountains to Wattendlath, and found themselves by eleven o'clock at night—at Coleridge's house! The next day Dorothy walked with Coleridge in the Windy Brow woods, and the next day, being Sunday, she records the fact that "the C.'s went to church." As J. Dykes Campbell mischievously notes, this upsets the general opinion that Coleridge never did such a thing. It was a week or two before they could tear themselves away, and the record of the visit is very incomplete. The brother and sister took at least one walk together along the Cockermouth road, their faces set towards the place of their birth, and perhaps their minds were on the old times there, though she remarks that William "was altering his poems." This expression recurs again and again in the Journal, with a frequency that would be alarming did we not know how much poetry he finally allowed to pass on to the printer. One might otherwise have feared that he might keep altering it for ever; and, indeed, gauged by a standard of mere time, he exerted himself far more in revision than in the first utterance of a poem. As an example of the extreme care taken with poems while they were going through the press, I will quote here a passage from Mrs. Davy's manuscript Memories of William Wordsworth. Whether it refers to 1800 or 1802 is not clear, and makes no difference:

"*Monday, April* 22, 1850.—I had some talk which interested me much to-day with good Mrs. Nicholson at the post-office, concerning Mr. Wordsworth. She has known him perhaps longer than anyone here, and in her simple, homely, hearty manner does as full justice to his sweet and fine qualities as anyone could do. She went back, in the manner of the old, on her earlier days of acquaintance with the poet and his sister, when they lived at Grasmere, and when, as she said, they would often walk to Ambleside together after dark, in order to repair some omission or alter some arrangement in the proof-sheets of his Poems, which had been posted for the press. 'At that time,' said Mrs. N., 'the mail used to pass through at one in the morning,

so my husband and me used to go early to bed; but when Mr. and Miss W. came, let it be as late as it would, my husband would get up and let them in and give them their letter out of the box, and then they would sit up in our parlour or in the kitchen, discussing over it and reading and changing till they had made it quite to their minds, and then they would seal up the packet again, and knock at our bed-room door, and say, "Now, Mr. Nicholson, please will you bolt the door after us? Here is our letter now for the post. We'll not trouble you any more this night." And, oh, they were always so friendly to us and so loving to one another.'"

On Sunday, August 17, Dorothy says: "William read us The Seven Sisters"—*i.e.*, "The Solitude of Binnorie." A few days later "Wm. read Peter Bell and the poem of Joanna, beside the Rothay by the roadside." The latter piece, like the others included by Wordsworth under the general title of "Poems on the Naming of Places," presents many difficulties to the commentator. If, as is commonly supposed, the Lady of the poem was Mary Hutchinson's sister Joanna, there is no other evidence that she had ever visited Grasmere, and certain it is that she could not have been there in Wordsworth's company eighteen months before the poem was written, as the heroine of the laugh is declared to have been. It was published in 1800. Wordsworth was always purposely and studiously inexact in passages containing personal references to himself and his friends. If biography were to depend entirely upon his poems for the record of his life, the chronology would be hopelessly contradictory. The "Poems on the Naming of Places" show his fine independence of ordinary standards. He was content to write for himself and the small circle about him, and indifferent to the rewards of fame; for he can scarcely have had publication in view, although some of the pieces did appear in the next volume he published. They are examples also, it must be said, of a dangerous tendency to look so closely at small things that he sometimes failed to see them in proper perspective. It is no wonder if many readers found these poems too personal, too particular. Beauties

of their own they of course possess, yet few persons would take the trouble to seek these out and do them justice if the entire achievement of their author had not lent interest—a deep and delightful interest—to all his friendships, haunts, and habits.

These remarks are not intended to be applied to "Peter Bell." That great and unique poem, a startling innovation in our literature, is no doubt a stumbling-block to many readers, but no one who even half understands Wordsworth's motives and principles can fail to perceive that it is one of his most characteristic works. In it, fully as much as in any other poem he ever wrote, we have the fruit of those profound studies in psychology which had engaged him for several years. He believed, and modern research has confirmed his opinion, that the science of psychology could be enriched by attention to the particular rather than the general. Since "normal" is only a term by which men assert an undue supremacy for what they deem to be general, it follows that human nature can best be investigated in specific cases, not one of which is ever really normal—that is to say, stamped with all the qualities of any given standard. "Sanity" is a mere abstraction. There is no wholly sane individual. And for certain purposes of investigation more can be learned from persons distinctly below the average of intelligence or of moral strength than from those whose natural propensities are overlaid with acquired wisdom and restrained by vigorous will-power. The oculist paralyzes the accommodation of the eye in order to see into its depths. Just so, the student of the mind can often see more plainly the recesses of our nature when it lies helplessly deprived of the immunities provided by strong volition. And what he sees there is not always unlovely or without honour to the species. Much rare information, many a deep vision and keen feeling, can be found in "defectives," as we call them now. Some things have been hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. Wordsworth took the pains to explain that his Idiot Boy was precisely what we term a "defective." In "Peter Bell" he wished,

in particular, to illustrate the influence of natural objects upon a soul amenable to superstition, but to few of the other means by which the race has been educated from animal grossness up to reason and self-control. It may perhaps be disputed whether he was wise to indulge, here and there, in a kind of grotesque simplicity, which looks like humour, but is not. Both he and Coleridge worked occasionally in this vein. There are traces of it, and wholly admirable, in the " Ancient Mariner." They had in view a certain strain of tragic rudeness which occurs sometimes in stories invented by children and in many old ballads.

There were frequent conferences with Coleridge about the contents of the new and enlarged edition of " Lyrical Ballads." By the most direct route, over Dunmail Raise, the distance between Keswick and Grasmere is fully thirteen miles, and these lovers of the hills were not always content to travel by the road, but sometimes made the arduous détour by way of Wattendlath, or even climbed over mighty Helvellyn. For example, under date of August 31, Dorothy writes: " At 11 o'clock Coleridge came, when I was walking in the still clear moonshine in the garden. He came over Helvellyn. Wm. was gone to bed, and John also, worn out with his ride round Coniston. We sate and chatted till half-past three." He stayed at Dove Cottage several days at least, and the time was rich in friendly talk. Coleridge read part of " Christabel." Wordsworth read what he had lately written, and one great result of the visit was that Wordsworth soon afterwards began to toil over his supreme work in prose, the Preface to the 1800 edition of " Lyrical Ballads." This essay, which revived in modern English the grand style of the seventeenth century, and is justly ranked with Sidney's " Defence of Poesie " as one of the noblest pieces of criticism in our language, or in any language, bears deep traces of Coleridge's influence, notwithstanding its thoroughly individual character. The entries in the Journal for the first three days of September tell so much of the dear companionship between the Words-

worths and their friend, that I transcribe the greater part of them. The Mr. Simpson who is mentioned was the clergyman at Wythburn, the tiny hamlet on the Keswick road just beyond Dunmail Raise. The Wordsworths were for ever stopping at his house to rest and drink tea and exchange gossip on their way to and from Keswick, and the Simpsons were often at Dove Cottage. It was just like Coleridge to find a hitherto undiscovered resource in the tiny orchard. And the instances here recorded will serve as well as a dozen others which might have been quoted, to show how he turned night into day.

"*Monday Morning, 1st September.*—We walked in the wood by the lake. W. read Joanna, and the Firgrove, to Coleridge. They bathed. The morning was delightful, with somewhat of an autumnal freshness. After dinner, Coleridge discovered a rock-seat in the orchard. Cleared away brambles. Coleridge went to bed after tea. John and I followed Wm. up the hill, and then returned to go to Mr. Simpson's. We borrowed some bottles for bottling rum. The evening somewhat frosty and grey, but very pleasant. I broiled Coleridge a mutton chop, which he ate in bed. Wm. was gone to bed. I chatted with John and Coleridge till near 12.

"*Tuesday, 2nd.*—In the morning they all went to Stickle Tarn. A very fine, warm, sunny, beautiful morning. I baked a pie, etc., for dinner. Little Sally was with me. The fair-day. Miss Simpson and Mr. came down to tea. We walked to the fair. There seemed very few people and very few stalls, yet I believe there were many cakes and much beer sold. My brothers came home to dinner at 6 o'clock. We drank tea immediately after by candlelight. It was a lovely moonlight night. We talked much about a house on Helvellyn. The moonlight shone only upon the village. It did not eclipse the village lights, and the sound of dancing and merriment came along the still air. I walked with Coleridge and Wm. up the lane and by the church, and then lingered with Coleridge in the garden. John and Wm. were both gone to bed, and all the lights out.

"*Wednesday, 3rd September.*—Coleridge, Wm., and John went from home, to go upon Helvellyn with Mr. Simpson. They set out after breakfast. I accompanied them up near the blacksmith's. . . . I then went to a

funeral at John Dawson's. About 10 men and 4 women. Bread, cheese, and ale. They talked sensibly and cheerfully about common things. The dead person, 56 years of age, buried by the parish. The coffin was neatly lettered and painted black, and covered with a decent cloth. They set the corpse down at the door; and, while we stood within the threshold, the men, with their hats off, sang, with decent and solemn countenances, a verse of a funeral psalm. The corpse was then borne down the hill, and they sang till they had passed the Town-End. I was affected to tears while we stood in the house, the coffin lying before me. There were no near kindred, no children. When we got out of the dark house the sun was shining, and the prospect looked as divinely beautiful as I ever saw it. It seemed more sacred than I had ever seen it, and yet more allied to human life. The green fields, in the neighbourhood of the churchyard, were as green as possible; and, with the brightness of the sunshine, looked quite gay. I thought she was going to a quiet spot, and I could not help weeping very much. When we came to the bridge, they began to sing again, and stopped during four lines before they entered the churchyard. . . . Wm. and John came home at 10 o'clock."

On September 10, 1800, Dorothy writes to Mrs. Marshall: "We meditate a journey to the neighbourhood of Scarborough to see our friends the Hutchinsons, who are settled there; we shall then extend our journey further and stop with you at Leeds. Our plan is to purchase a taxed cart, which we can have for seven guineas, and hire a horse if we cannot afford to buy one; but this being altogether a very grand scheme, a large sum will be necessary to execute it, and it will depend entirely upon William's success with the booksellers."

Miss Wordsworth entered many a mountain and village household, and shared the joys and sorrows of many a humble family. Her brother, though absorbed in his work, took his part in all these interests. Poor foundered travellers, peddlers, and destitute children, often came to their door for a bit to eat and a small dole. Help was given neither carelessly nor grudgingly, but after close and sympathetic inquiry. The cottage often

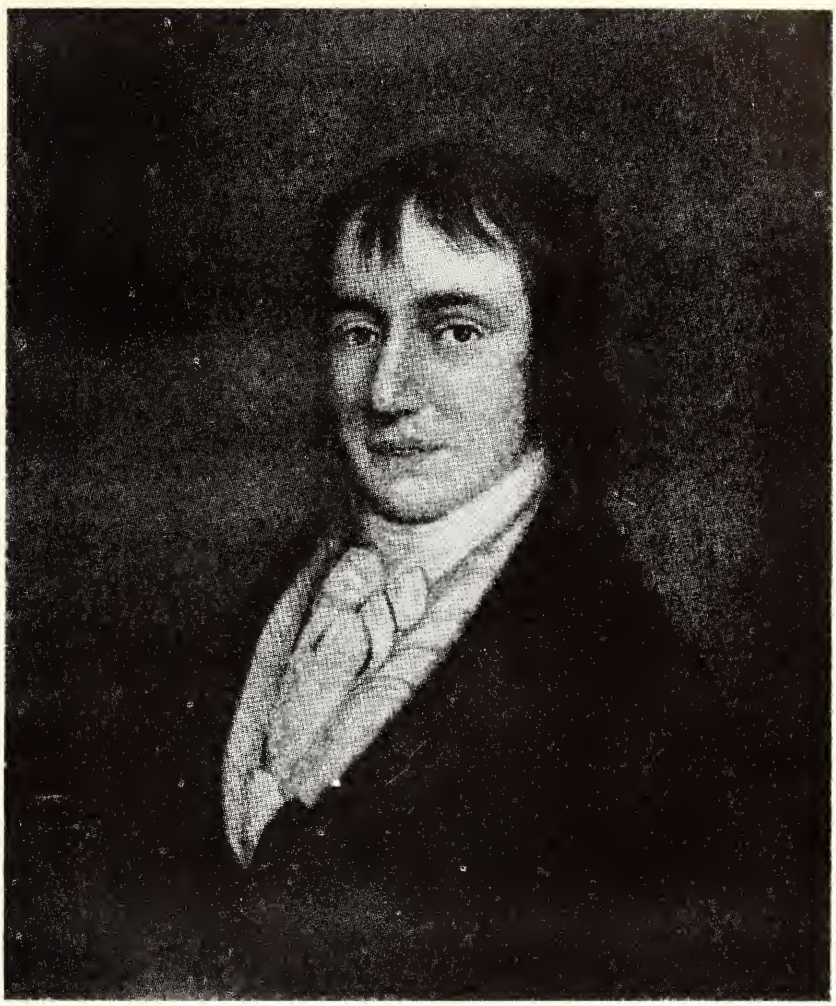
sheltered some visiting friend, though money and provisions were scarce enough. They lived on terms of great friendliness with their humble neighbours, the Ashburners, performing and accepting a thousand kind acts. Charles Lloyd was living at Ambleside, and sometimes called. The Journal was neglected throughout the middle of September, and written up from memory afterwards. It mentions several calls from " Jones," and finally a week's visit from him, ending September 26. This may have been the Rev. Robert Jones, Wordsworth's old college friend, his companion on his walking trip through France. Coleridge came in on the 26th, and on the 29th John Wordsworth went away to join his ship, the *Earl of Abergavenny*. The farewell took place near Grisedale Tarn, at the top of the pass dividing the vale of Grasmere from the eastern valleys that lead to Penrith. His sister wrote: " Wm. and I parted with him in sight of Ullswater. It was a fine day, showery, but with sunshine and fine clouds. Poor fellow, my heart was right sad. I could not help thinking we should see him again because he was only going to Penrith." The sailor brother had a childlike and lovable nature. He loved poetry and had read deeply, though not widely. He shared the fondness of his older brother and sister for out-door life, and was altogether a cheerful and congenial comrade.

The last sheet of the Notes and Preface to " Lyrical Ballads " was written out by the faithful amanuensis on September 30, and corrected on October 1, 1800. The next day was spent in well-earned recreation. They went to their lovely haunt on Butterlip How, and looked up into Easedale, where William was wont to compose beside the rushing brook. And Dorothy records a telltale fact, in terms perhaps unconsciously amusing, which shows how very human she and her brother were: " We had a pleasant conversation about the manners of the rich; avarice, inordinate desires, and the effeminacy, unnaturalness, and unworthy objects of education." Among the consolations of poverty this form of entertainment counts for a good deal.

On October 3, 1800, realizing that she had under her hand the material for a poem, and perhaps obeying her brother's suggestion, she wrote the following details of an incident which to most persons would have seemed unimportant. Wordsworth did not begin to compose "The Leech Gatherer" till May 3, 1802, but here is its real beginning:

"When William and I returned from accompanying Jones, we met an old man almost double. He had on a coat, thrown over his shoulders, above his waistcoat and coat. Under this he carried a bundle, and had an apron on and a nightcap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose. John, who afterwards met him at Wytheburn, took him for a Jew. He was of Scotch parents, but had been born in the army. He had had a wife, and 'she was a good woman, and it pleased God to bless us with ten children.' All these were dead but one, of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches were scarce, and he had not strength for it. He lived by begging, and was making his way to Carlisle, where he should buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce, partly owing to this dry season, but many years they had been scarce. He supposed it owing to their being much sought after, that they did not breed fast, and were of slow growth. Leeches were formerly 2s. 6d. per 100; they are now 30s. He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broken, his body driven over, his skull fractured. He felt no pain till he recovered from his first insensibility. It was then late in the evening, when the light was just going away."

On October 4 Coleridge came in, very wet, while they were at dinner, and talked till twelve, though he had sat up all the night before, "writing essays for the newspaper." He read them the second part of "Christabel." He read it again next day, and they had "increasing pleasure." No doubt conversation with Coleridge gave Wordsworth fresh ideas, for he and Dorothy spent the morning writing an addition to the Preface. As was generally the case, excessive labour made William very ill, and he went to bed. Coleridge and Dorothy "walked to Ambleside after dark with the letter," no doubt the



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

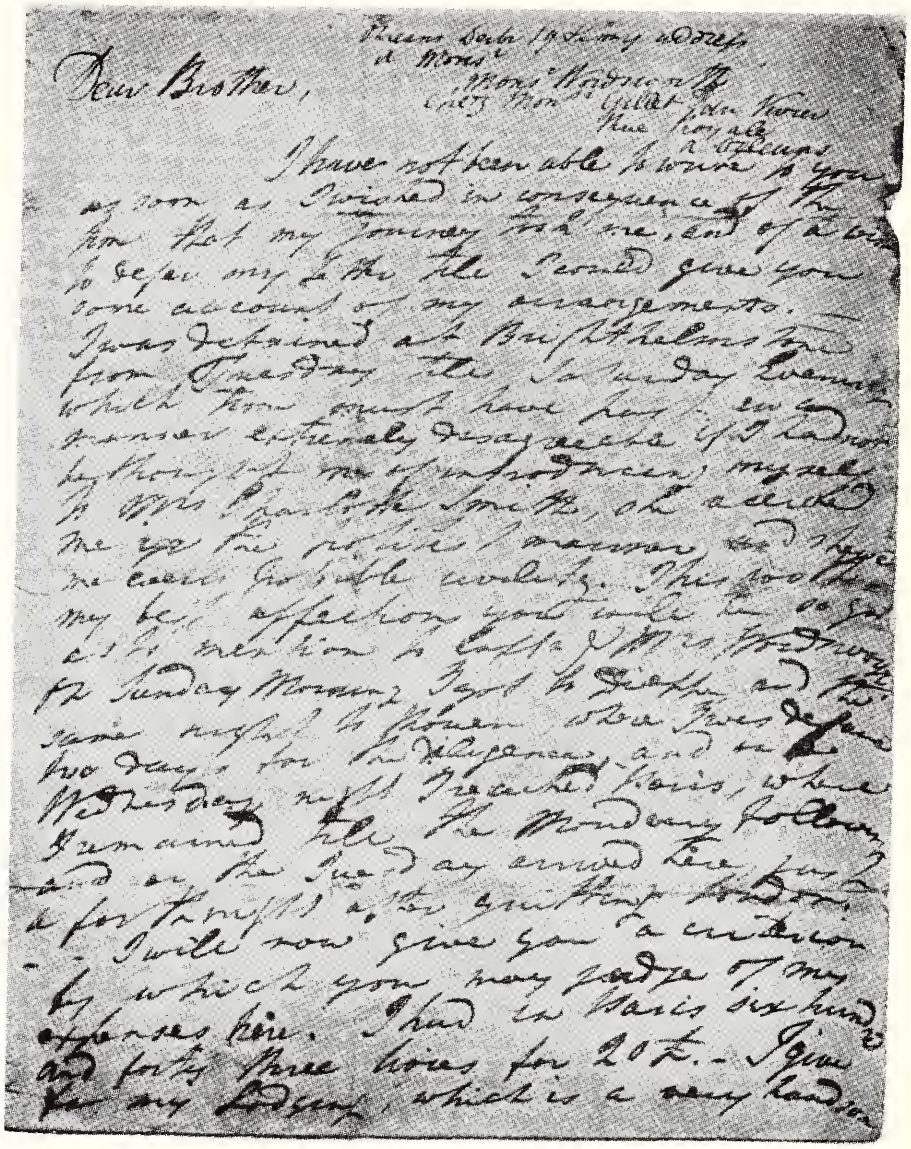
From the drawing by W. Shuter, April, 1798

THE HOUSE IN WHICH WORDSWORTH WAS BORN

From a photograph by Walmsley

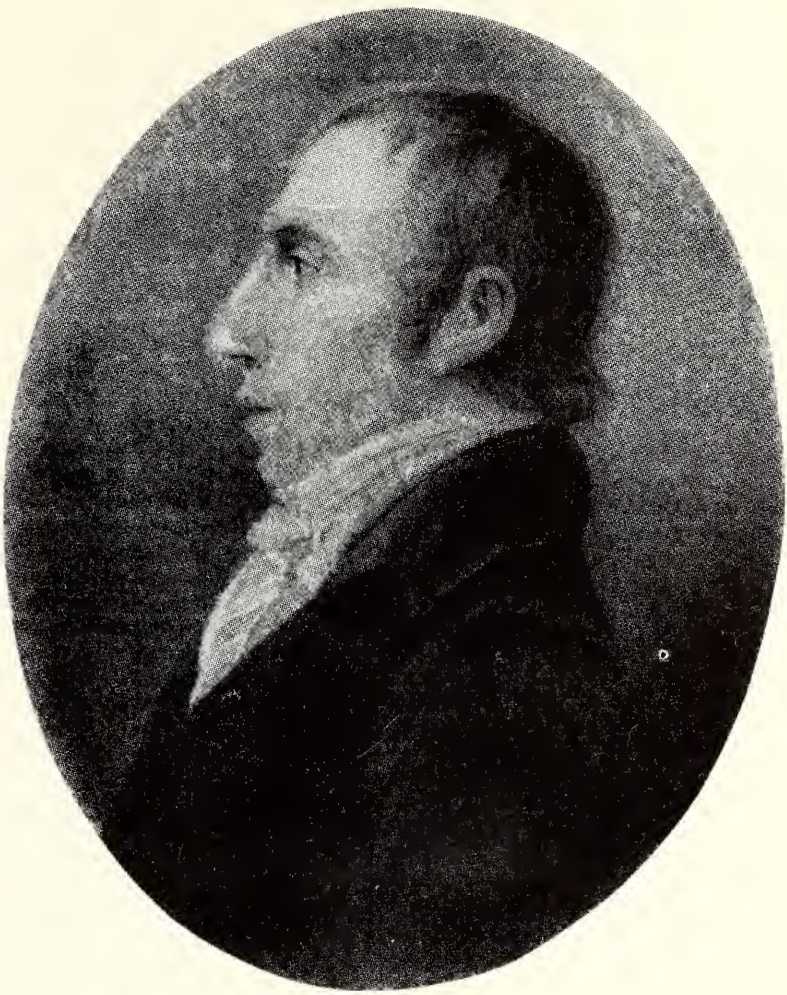
DAME TYSON'S COTTAGE, HAWKSHEAD

From a photograph by Walmsley



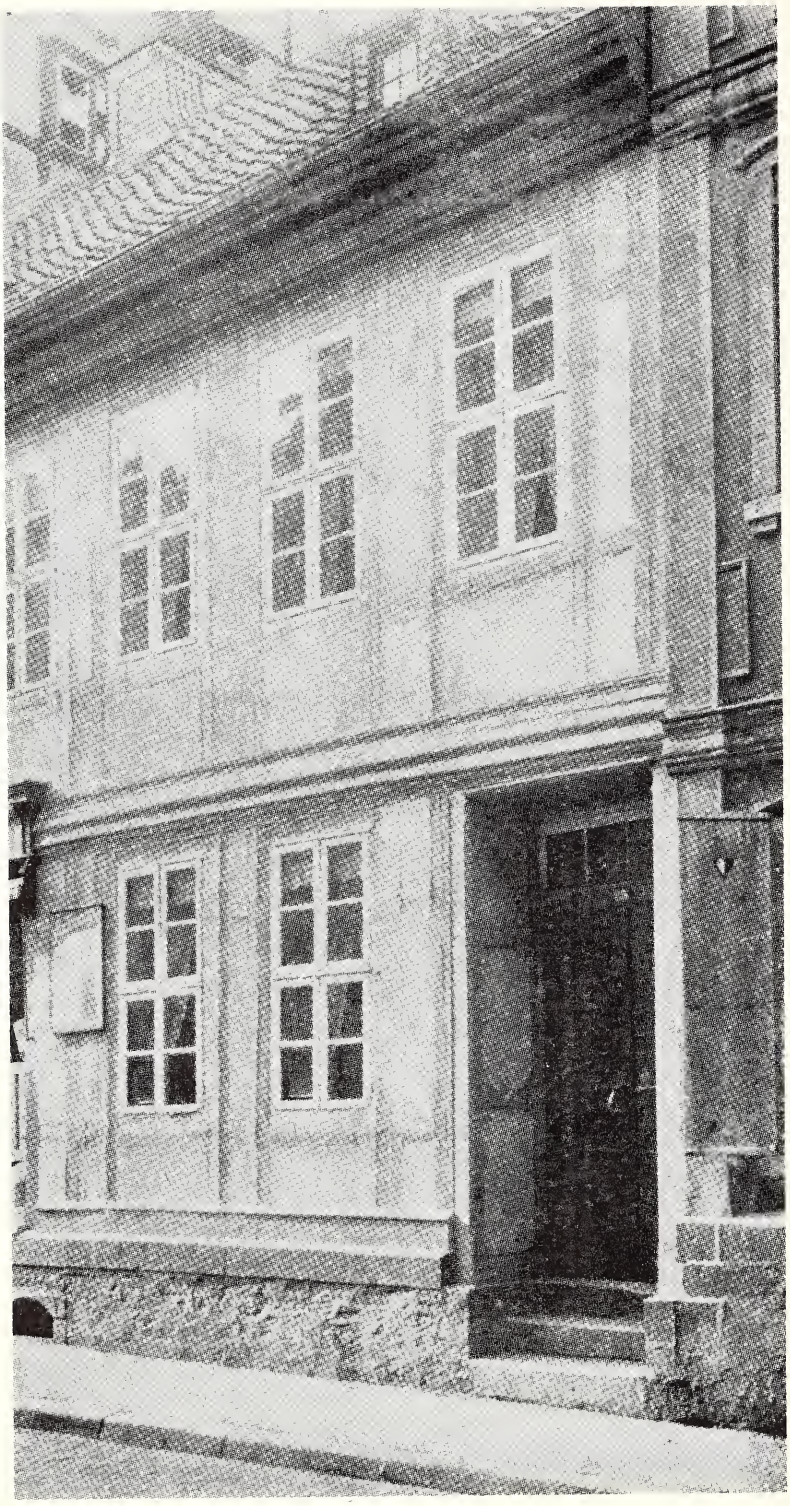
WORDSWORTH'S LETTER FROM ORLEANS, DECEMBER, 1792

Facsimile of page 1



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

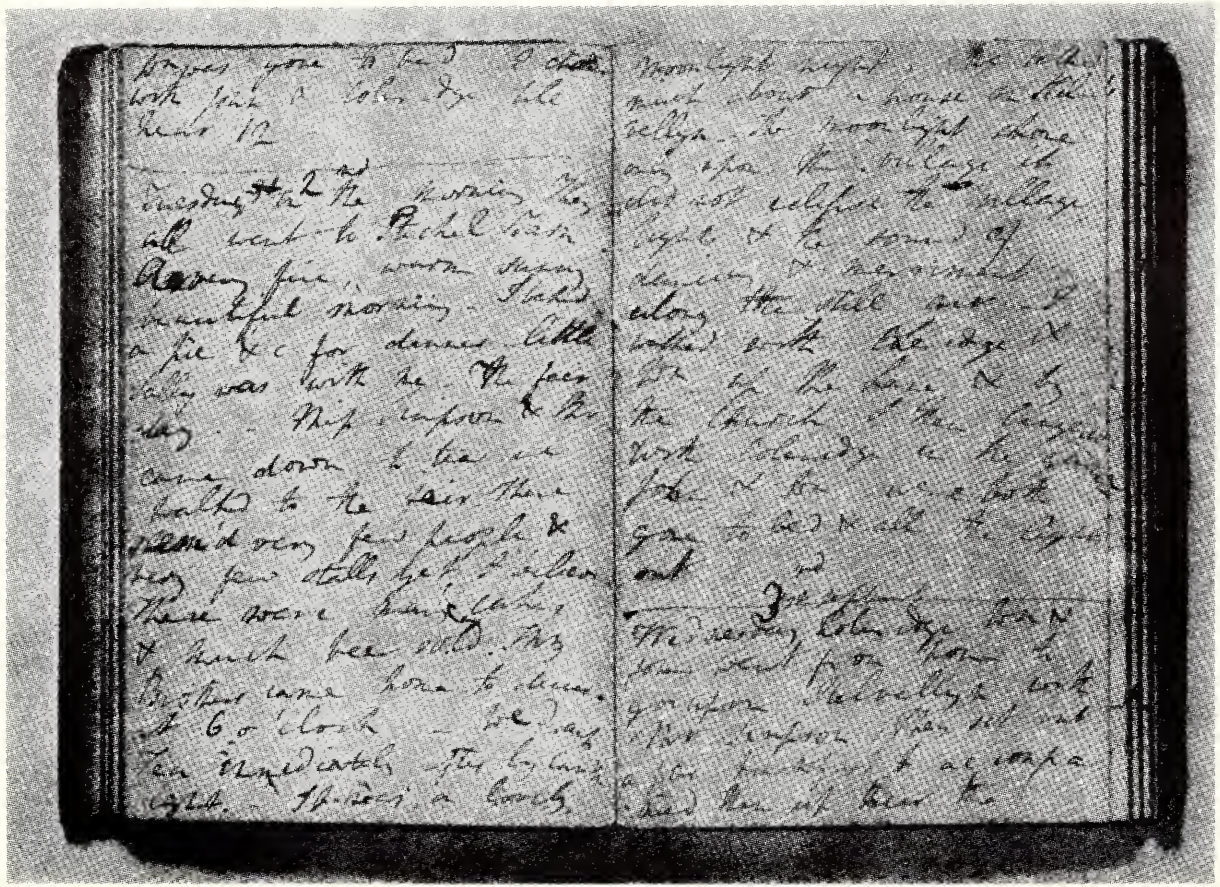
From a drawing by Hancock about 1796



THE HOUSE IN GOSLAR WHERE THE WORDSWORTHS LIVED IN 1798

DOVE COTTAGE FROM THE FRONT

From a photograph by Walmsley



FACSIMILE OF TWO PAGES OF DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S JOURNAL
FOR SEPTEMBER 1, 2, AND 3, 1800

fresh manuscript of this addition. Coleridge intended to leave them the next day, but did not, and after tea they read "The Pedlar"—*i.e.*, a portion of "The Excursion." It was determined not to print "Christabel" with the "Lyrical Ballads." On the following day Dorothy accompanied Coleridge as far as Mr. Simpson's on his way home. She records the receipt of a five-pound note from Basil Montagu, who was gradually paying what he owed them for the care of his son.

By far the most interesting entries in the Journal for the last three months in 1800 are those which relate how the poem "Michael" was composed. The theme appears to have been suggested to Wordsworth by some actual occurrence. He had now been living long enough among his rustic neighbours to know and appreciate to the full some of their touching domestic tales. The story of "Michael," as it came to him, was connected with a particular spot, hidden in the green bosom of the hills, about two miles from the vale of Grasmere. One fine October day, when the colours of the mountains were "soft and rich with orange fern, the cattle pasturing upon the hilltops, kites sailing in the sky, sheep bleating, and feeding in the watercourses," Dorothy and William "walked up Greenhead Gill in search of a sheepfold." They found it "in the form of a heart unequally divided," but already falling away. Yet the stones were still lying, a hundred and twelve years later, in much the same shape, and nothing that had happened, of joy or grief, of improvement or destruction, in all this world, had altered the scene in any respect. Only the sky was visible, and the swelling outline and green slopes of Fairfield, and the dashing torrent, and a few boulders. The great poem, apparently so simple in construction and so free from artifice in verse, cost Wordsworth immense toil. He began to compose it immediately after visiting the sheepfold, and returned to the task again and again, wearing himself out, as his sister relates, until on December 9 she writes: "Wm. finished his poem to-day." The great calm of this and other poems was not attained without vast expense of emotion.

" He writes," said Dorothy, " with so much feeling and agitation that it brings on a sense of pain."

Meanwhile the second edition of " Lyrical Ballads " was being slowly prepared. Coleridge, who was writing for *The Morning Post*, left the work almost entirely to Wordsworth. He would drop in at Town-end for dinner or to spend a few days, coming empty-handed, but abounding in glorious talk. A characteristic record is that of October 22: " Wm. composed without much success at the sheepfold. Coleridge came in to dinner. He had done nothing. We were very merry. C. and I went to look at the prospect from his seat. Wm. read Ruth, etc., after supper. Coleridge read Christabel." The neighbourhood—and it must be remembered that there were scarcely any limits to it—was full of " seats " and " nooks," favourite views and trees and rocks, which this delightful trio loved with childlike attachment. It is a proof of Wordsworth's intense individuality that his Preface to the second edition of " Lyrical Ballads," if we except one sentence, to be mentioned later, has a style completely his own, for it was written in the intervals of Coleridge's impassioned conversation.

Of this good fellowship we nowhere obtain a better glimpse than in Coleridge's letter to Humphry Davy, from Keswick, July 25, 1800:

" W. Wordsworth is such a lazy fellow that I bemire myself by making promises for him: the moment I received your letter, I wrote to him. He will, I hope, write immediately to Biggs and Cottle. At all events, those poems must not yet be delivered up to them, because that beautiful poem, ' The Brothers,' which I read to you in Paul Street, I neglected to deliver to you, and that must begin the volume: I trust, however, that I have invoked the sleeping bard with a spell so potent that he will awake and deliver up the sword of Argantyr which is to rive the enchanter *Gaudyverse* from his crown to his foot. . . . We drank tea to-night before I left Grasmere, on the island in that lovely lake; our kettle swung over the fire, hanging from the branch of a fir-tree, and I lay and saw the woods, and mountains, and lake all trembling, and as it were idealized through the

subtle smoke, which rose up from the clear, red embers of the fir-apples which we had collected: afterwards we made a glorious bonfire on the margin, by some elder-bushes, whose twigs heaved and sobbed in the uprushing column of smoke, and the image of the bonfire, and of us that danced round it, ruddy, laughing faces in the twilight; the image of this in a lake, smooth as that sea to whose waves the Son of God had said *Peace!* May God, and all his sons, love you as I do."

Coleridge's joyous impatience burst out in a letter to Josiah Wedgwood, from Keswick, November 1:

"Wordsworth's second volume of Lyrical Ballads will, I hope, and almost believe, afford you as unmingled pleasure as is in the nature of a collection of very varied poems to afford to one individual mind. Sheridan has sent to him too—requests him to write a tragedy for Drury Lane. But W. will not be diverted by anything from the prosecution of his great work."

By this, no doubt, is meant the projected philosophical poem, of which many hundred lines had already been written, at Racedown, at Alfoxden, and in Germany.

CHAPTER XIV

WORDSWORTH THE CRITIC

THUS the year 1800 came to a happy end. Grasmere had completely won the poet and his sister. The natural beauty of the place had lifted their spirits to an unwonted height. Their rustic neighbours had gained their respect and affection. Of educated people they had within reach the Simpsons at Wythburn, Charles Lloyd at Ambleside, Thomas Clarkson, the anti-slavery agitator, and his amiable wife, at Eusemere on Ullswater, and the Coleridges at Keswick. A great period of poetical studies had been rounded out with the completion of " Lyrical Ballads," and the way cleared for work of a different character. Of this latter sort, " Michael " was already done, " The Leech Gatherer " was conceived, and progress had been made with the philosophical poem which was to occupy the coming years.

To speak of the book prepared in 1800 as a second edition of " Lyrical Ballads " is, and always has been, confusing. Wordsworth hoped that its predecessor had gained for him a number of readers,* and he wished to alter some of the poems it contained. From every other consideration, it would have been more proper to give the new book a fresh name. One is tempted to suspect that Wordsworth, in his correspondence with the publishers and in other references to the book, unduly subordinates Coleridge to himself. It is true that " Christabel " was not included in the volume, and that, with the exception of the " Ancient Mariner "

* As Mr. Thomas Hutchinson has conjectured, with the approval of W. Hale White (" A Description of the Wordsworth and Coleridge Manuscripts in the Possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman," 1897), the favourable review in *The British Critic* of October, 1799, attributing the whole work to Coleridge, had probably helped to sell some of the edition, of which Cottle had given the copyright to Wordsworth.

and " Love," Coleridge's contributions were very slight. He had been expected to furnish more, and Dorothy more than once records her disappointment at his failure to do so. He wrote to his friend Humphry Davy at Bristol, on October 9, 1800, an explanation of Wordsworth's conduct which fails to convince:

" The ' Christabel ' was running up to 1,300 lines, and was so much admired by Wordsworth that he thought it indelicate to print two volumes with his name, in which so much of another man's was included; and, which was more of consequence, the poem was in direct opposition to the very purpose for which the Lyrical Ballads were published, viz., an experiment to see how far those passions which alone give any value to extraordinary incidents, were capable of interesting, in and for themselves, in the incidents of common life. We mean to publish the ' Christabel,' therefore, with a long blank-verse poem of Wordsworth's entitled ' The Pedlar.' "

" Christabel " probably never ran to such a length except in the imagination of its author, and the inconsistency of which Coleridge makes so much is not at all evident. As is apparent from the correspondence between William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Coleridge, on the one hand, with Biggs and Cottle the printers and Longman the publisher, on the other, every arrangement was made with Coleridge's full consent. Among the notes to the first volume of the new edition, however, there was the following criticism of the " Ancient Mariner," ostensibly written by Wordsworth, and said by W. Hale White to have been sent to the printers in Dorothy's handwriting. It affects one unpleasantly, as a piece of ungracious frankness. Wordsworth, one feels, ought not to have called attention to the defects of his colleague's work, even though the latter had detected them and considered them important. The note is as follows; it was not reprinted after 1801:

" I cannot refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as may have been pleased with this poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in

some sort to me; as the author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the poem, and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural; secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon; thirdly, that the events, having no necessary connection, do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is everywhere true to nature; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images and are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, though the metre is itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable. It therefore appeared to me that these several merits (the first of which, namely, that of the passion, is of the highest kind) gave to the poem a value which is not often possessed by better poems. On this account I requested of my Friend to permit me to republish it."

No doubt this was printed with Coleridge's consent, but he, kind soul, would have been willing to make a public confession of still graver defects. Charles Lamb, it is refreshing to know, took up the cudgels for him, and, replying to Wordsworth point by point, in a letter written immediately after the volume was published, concludes: " You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see."

How the printers ever managed to get the book out is a marvel. The manuscript came to them piecemeal in the handwriting of the two poets and Dorothy, not to mention Sara Hutchinson, who was staying at Townend; the punctuation was done in part by Coleridge

and in part by Humphry Davy at Bristol; there were numerous changes of text, and some pages were cancelled. The authors were in the Lake country, the printers in the West, the publishers in London. Yet it appeared, not more than a month behind time, in January, 1801.

Recluse though he was, Wordsworth had a way of bursting into the arena of public life when he saw a fit occasion. His zeal for the welfare of his country never slackened, and he was not restrained by false humility, feeling himself entitled by power of intellect to address whomsoever he chose. He sent a copy of the new work to the great Whig statesman, Charles James Fox, who had temporarily withdrawn from politics, and was indulging himself in an immense feast of ancient and modern literature. The gift was accompanied with a long letter, dated January 14, 1801. In this Wordsworth boldly affirms his confidence that he has performed one of the noblest functions of a poet: he has done public service by revealing the instincts and principles of one set of men to another; he has, as we should now say, in the words of Tolstoi, " made that understood and felt which, in the form of an argument, might be incomprehensible and inaccessible," and thereby " united people." The letter not only shows this high consciousness of religious performance, but is remarkable also as indicating a shift in the author's political point of view. Among the sources of distress and moral degradation he no longer mentions militarism and the Tory measures which drew forth his denunciation seven years before; it is now rather the evils of industrialism and their false palliatives which he attacks, and it is plain that the new Whiggery will not meet with his approval. And no wonder; for the workhouse in 1800 was as horrible as the factory.

" Recently," declares Wordsworth, " by the spreading of manufactures through every part of the country, by the heavy taxes upon postage, by workhouses, houses of industry, and the invention of soup-shops, etc., superadded to the increasing disproportion between the price

of labour and that of the necessaries of life, the bonds of domestic feeling among the poor, as far as the influence of these things has extended, have been weakened, and in innumerable instances entirely destroyed." And he adds: "In the two poems, The Brothers, and Michael, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent proprietors of land, here called statesmen, men of respectable education, who daily labour on their own properties. The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population, if these men are placed above poverty. But if they are proprietors of small estates, which have descended to them from their ancestors, the power which these affections will acquire amongst such men is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying-point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man, from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn. This class of men is rapidly disappearing. You, Sir, have a consciousness, upon which every good man will congratulate you, that the whole of your public conduct has, in one way or other, been directed to the preservation of this class of men, and those who hold similar situations. You have felt that the most sacred of all property is the property of the poor. The two poems, which I have mentioned, were written with a view to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply. 'Pectus enim est quod disertos facit, et vis mentis. Ideoque imperitis quoque, si modo sint aliquo affectu concitati, verba non desunt.' The poems are faithful copies from nature; and I hope whatever effect they may have upon you, you will at least be able to perceive that they may excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts, and may in some small degree enlarge our feeling of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature, by showing that our best qualities are possessed by men whom we are too apt to consider, not with reference to the points in

which they resemble us, but to those in which they manifestly differ from us. I thought, at a time when these feelings are sapped in so many ways, that the two poems might co-operate, however feebly, with the illustrious efforts which you have made to stem this and other evils with which the country is labouring; and it is on this account alone that I have taken the liberty of thus addressing you."

This way of regarding poetry was thoroughly characteristic of Wordsworth. It was a new way, and Fox, who thought the finest compositions of the eighteenth century were Pope's "Eloisa," Voltaire's "Zaïre," Gray's "Elegy," and Metastasio's "Isacco," failed to see that his correspondent was in earnest; failed to see the point, that is, and thought only of metre. In his long-deferred reply, dated May 25, he says: "The poems have given me the greatest pleasure; and if I were obliged to choose out of them, I do not know whether I should not say that 'Harry Gill,' 'We are Seven,' 'The Mad Mother,' and 'The Idiot,' are my favourites. I read with particular attention the two you pointed out; but whether it be from early prepossessions, or whatever other cause, I am no great friend to blank-verse for subjects which are to be treated of with simplicity." Evidently Fox, contrary to popular opinion, did not have his heart sufficiently near his head, for Coleridge had written to Davy in December: "It ["Michael"] is of a mild, unimposing character, but full of beauties to those short-necked men who have their hearts sufficiently near their heads—the relative distance of which (according to citizen Tourder, the French translator of Spallanzani) determines the sagacity or stupidity of all bipeds and quadrupeds."

Coleridge wrote to Poole in January that by his own advice, and at Longman's expense, copies, with appropriate letters, had been sent to the Duchess of Devonshire, Sir Bland Burgess, Mrs. Jordan, Mr. Fox, Mr. Wilberforce, and two or three others. He had dictated all the other letters, he declared, while Wordsworth wrote the one to Mr. Fox. "I have had that letter

transcribed for you," he adds, " for its excellence, and mine to Wilberforce, because the two contain a good view of our notions and motives, poetical and political."

No comment on the poems of the second volume could disclose the poet's purpose so well as his own account of " Michael," in a letter to Poole, dated April 9.

" In the last poem of my 2nd volume," he says, " I have attempted to give a picture of a man, of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart—the parental affection, and the love of property, *landed* property, including the feelings of inheritance, home, and personal and family independence. This poem has, I know, drawn tears from the eyes of more than one—persons well acquainted with the manners of the ' Statesmen,' as they are called, of this country; and, moreover, persons who never wept in reading verse before."

He is anxious, he says, to know the effect of the poem on Poole, who himself possesses an inherited estate and is familiar with the language, manners, and feeling of the middle order of people who dwell in the country. " Perhaps in England there is no more competent judge than you must be of the skill and knowledge with which my pictures are drawn. I had a still further wish that this poem should please you, because in writing it I had your character often before my eyes, and sometimes thought I was delineating such a man as you yourself would have been under the same circumstances."

This revelation of Wordsworth's concern for the maintenance and spread of the happiness based on the ownership of small homes helps us to understand his alarm at the growth of industrialism. He saw that under the guise of what were then called liberal ideas, powerful political forces, in alliance with business interests, were luring the rural population of England into manufacturing towns, breaking up families and home ties, turning independent workers into mill " hands," changing the face of the country, cheapening life, and diminishing happiness. This explains much in his political philosophy which later appeared to be reac-

tionary. It explains much of his future distrust of what younger or shallower men deemed progress, and it is perfectly in harmony with his Revolutionary zeal of former years.

No one has ever sufficiently pointed out how much solicitude considerations of this kind caused in the hearts of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Poole. To understand Wordsworth's poetry, it is absolutely necessary that his views on this subject should be taken into account. They were the outgrowth of close observation and anxious sympathy. He may have been lacking in those outstanding qualities which enable some men to mix freely with persons of inferior education and humbler station. Such persons perhaps never realized that he appreciated and loved them. But to a very large extent he lived for them. We have only to think of Goethe, his purely intellectual and æsthetic interests, his careful system of self-protection, his aristocratic exclusiveness, to perceive that, in comparison with him, Wordsworth was the true philanthropist. Yet Goethe, in a condescending hour, would probably have " got on better " with humble people, and appeared more genial than Wordsworth. Coleridge shared his friend's anxiety. Lacking Wordsworth's consistency and self-restraint, however, he gave way to his impatience in terms for which even Poole, with his advanced ideas, reproved him. Coleridge replied rather testily in a letter of October 5: " I own I have formed long and meditative habits of aversion to the Rich, love to the Poor or the *un*wealthy, and belief in the excessive evils arising from Property. How is it *possible*, Poole, that you can have all these feelings ?" We may be sure that these topics formed a frequent subject of conversation at Town-end.

Wordsworth has often been blamed for taking himself seriously and appreciating his own poetry at its full value. Very great and very little men are the ones to give offence by taking themselves seriously, and the objection might be summarily dismissed by asking whether Wordsworth was not, then, a very great man. And for seeing in his poetry the excellence which wise readers

have more and more come to see in it, we can only praise his critical vision. Yet we may easily excuse even good judges of poetry and some of his best friends, notably Lamb, for being stunned by the calm assurance, not obtrusive, yet absolutely unyielding, with which he gave them to understand that he knew how great he was. Lamb thought Wordsworth vain and pompous in his remarks about "Lyrical Ballads." What seemed to him most ridiculous was the poet's eagerness to know his opinion of the book, taken in connection with what appeared to be an effort at lofty indifference.

When once this bad beginning was over, the poems won their way into Lamb's heart of hearts, in spite of his professed dislike for the country and, what was more formidable, his taste for romance, for the quaint, the curious, the unusual, in phraseology and feeling. And, of course, there were no dregs of personal ill-will. Lamb continued to think, as he had said to Lloyd the year before, that such men as Coleridge and Wordsworth "would exclude solitude in the Hebrides or Thule."

It will be well at this point to consider, in connection with one another, the Prefaces to the different editions of "Lyrical Ballads," and certain letters which passed between the poet and John Wilson (Christopher North), on subjects connected therewith. The Preface of 1798 began with a bold challenge:

"It is the honourable characteristic of poetry that its materials are to be found in every subject which can interest the human mind. The evidence of this fact is to be sought, not in the writings of Critics, but in those of Poets themselves. The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure. Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts

can be permitted to assume that title. It is desirable that such readers, for their own sakes, should not suffer the solitary word Poetry, a word of very disputed meaning, to stand in the way of their gratification; but that, while they are perusing this book, they should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents; and if the answer be favourable to the author's wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision."

Fault was found with "We are Seven" and "Anecdote for Fathers," on the ground that the incidents they recorded were insignificant; with "Simon Lee" for the simplicity of its language; with "The Idiot Boy" because its subject was strange and supposedly not capable of imparting pleasure. Readers accustomed to what Tolstoi calls "esoteric" art—that is, art for which a special and unnatural taste has had to be fostered—were inclined to call the whole collection "disgusting." Some were repelled by the "lowness" of the characters; it was thought paradoxical to attribute fineness of feeling or heroic strength of passion to persons of humble rank. These objections, combining in varying proportions, were urged by Wordsworth's friends, and were stated, as we have seen, in the reviews. Wordsworth's convictions were not shaken nor was his courage abated by these unfavourable judgments. But he learned that it was necessary to educate the public, not merely by example, but by precept, and that it would be well to set forth his literary principles much more elaborately than he had done before. With severe toil he produced a second Preface, more than twelve times as long as the first. In this he advanced what almost amounts to a systematic theory of poetic art. It is certainly, with the possible exception of Sidney's "Defence of Poesie," the most eloquent, as it is without rival the most weighty, treatise on the subject in our language. Although the specific application of his views makes the work here and there, and particularly in the latter part, appear less general than if they had been embodied in a formal

essay, there is really no lack of largeness. The Preface is much more than an introduction to "Lyrical Ballads." It is an exposition of the fundamental laws of association as applied in poetry. It announces not only Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, though that would be a notable performance, for Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction has given a fresh texture to nearly all English poetry for the last hundred years; but it heralds one of the most splendid triumphs of democracy. Wordsworth vindicated a levelling-up process in two particulars: the choice of language and the choice of subjects. When the poems and the prefaces were new, they seemed startling innovations; we have grown so accustomed to their results that now they do not sufficiently impress us. We fail to take them quite seriously, as they were intended to be taken. Yet the theory is scarcely to be distinguished from Tolstoi's, and its most complete illustration is to be found in "Leaves of Grass."

Wordsworth was not the man to abandon a position because it was attacked. But he recognized, and probably was persuaded by Coleridge, that his phrase about "the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society" needed to be considerably modified. Accordingly, in the first paragraph of the second Preface, he makes a more accurate statement:

"The first volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart."

Here is, of course, an immense difference. The validity of the earlier statement could have been disproved from the poems themselves. The latter statement accurately describes the language of the best poetry in all ages. Neither Wordsworth nor Tolstoi calls for a new kind of poetry. They distinguish universal art, which interprets the deep experiences common to man-

kind in terms commonly understood, from esoteric and decadent art, which is limited in its source, its medium, and its appeal. Yet so corrupted had the taste of many readers of poetry become, that the fit audience were very few.

It has been taken for granted generally that the taste for English poetry was peculiarly depraved in the eighteenth century. I doubt if it is not still and has not always been the case, that simplicity and realism shock before they please those persons who have received the sort of education that removes them, in knowledge, from the mass of their fellow-men. Certain influences had been at work since the time of Shakespeare to widen this gap. The Anglican clergy had been drawn increasingly from the upper classes, and educated at the universities to an extent unknown in pre-Reformation times. A certain tincture of classical learning had become one of the pretensions of the masters of the land. The universities themselves had lost touch with actuality by giving up in large measure the practical side of their work. Since the Middle Ages, they had been frequented, in increased proportion, by men with no professional career in view, whose object in attending them was to obtain general culture or social polish. This is not to say that the culture and polish were not real, or that the spreading of literary taste among the upper classes was not extremely valuable to the nation. But the taste was for qualities beyond the scope of readers not thus trained and privileged. It preferred the antique to the modern, perhaps justly, but with exaggeration of the difference between them, and so blandly and complacently as to make innovation appear impudent. Classicism means the establishment of standards. The standard of poetic diction had been profoundly and unfortunately modified by a caste. Wordsworth realized this, and knew that his appreciative readers would be those few persons among the educated who were original enough to read with their own eyes. "I had formed," he says in the second Preface, "no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of these Poems: I

flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure: and, on the other hand, I was well aware that by those who should dislike them they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please." He declines to undertake a systematic defence of the theory upon which the poems were written, but admits that "there would be something like impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed."

The general opinion no doubt was, and perhaps on a lower plane still is, that poetry is an art of decoration, that poetry adds something to nature by way of improvement. The idea was well expressed by Cowper in his "Tyrocinium," where, speaking of the soul of man, he says:

> For her the Fancy, roving unconfined,
> The present Muse of every pensive mind,
> Works magic wonders, adds a brighter hue
> To Nature's scenes, than Nature ever knew.

He did not hesitate, therefore, to write of "feathered tribes domestic" when he meant hens. Nor did Thomson probably dream that he was not really complimenting nature when he wrote:

> Oh, stretched amid these orchards of the sun,
> Give me to drain the coçoa's milky bowl,
> And from the palm to draw its freshening wine,
> More bounteous far than all the frantic juice
> Which Bacchus pours.

A needle in Cowper's unroughened hands becomes "the threaded steel." A thick mist is a "frequent" mist, because in the Latin spices much poetry is embalmed. Thomson for the same reason treats us to "gelid" and "gravid" and "turgent." And it was no less authoritative a critic than Gray who wrote:

"The language of the age is never the language of poetry; except among the French, whose verse, where the thought or image does not support it, differs in nothing from prose. Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself; to which almost everyone that has written has added something by enriching it with foreign idioms and derivatives—nay, sometimes words of their own composition or invention. Shakespeare and Milton have been great creators this way; and no one more licentious than Pope or Dryden, who perpetually borrow expressions from the former. . . . Our language not being a settled thing (like the French) has an undoubted right to words of an hundred years old, provided antiquity have not rendered them unintelligible" ("On Poetic Diction," p. 121, edition of 1827).

A candid reader will not deny that most of the "Lyrical Ballads" in the edition of 1800 agree very accurately with the following statement:

"The principal object proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement."

It is obvious at a glance that five different purposes are mentioned in this declaration. The connection between them is not so obvious. First we have the choice of incidents and situations. In making this choice from common life Wordsworth was, of course, doing only what some English poets in every age had done, though few had done it so systematically. Then, the medium is to be a selection of the language really used by men, and such language is to be employed *throughout;* there are to be no deviations. The crude statement of the first Preface is here considerably modified, but the principle

is unchanged. Commonness and reality are still the essentials. But common life might be faithfully delineated in a selection of the language really used by men, and the result might have merely a scientific value; it might be devoid of every quality peculiar to poetry. This contingency is provided against by the faintly proffered proposal to throw over his subjects " a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect." The subordinate place of this proposition and the curiously guarded way in which it is made show how tenacious Wordsworth was of his main purpose—to preserve reality. There is here no compromise with artificiality, with the fanciful, the romantic. " Ordinary things," not chimæras or fairies, not personifications, not even rarities of nature, are to be presented to the mind; and although the aspect shall be unusual, it shall not be unnatural. To perceive the naturalness of the unusual, and that ordinary things are always interesting, is the personal trait of a poet. If he would become an artist and make other men see with his eyes, he must rouse them by means of unusual cases, yet his own understanding of life would be almost as complete without these.

The relation of the unusual to poetic art was a subject that had been much discussed with Coleridge at Alfoxden. Wordsworth's own discovery and decision, as regards the choice of subjects from common life and the choice of language really used by men, were made by himself, before he met Coleridge. The vagueness and fluidity of the third phrase we are now discussing, the very words " certain " and " unusual," and " aspect," are Coleridgean. This part of the proposal takes us back to the day when the idea which bore fruit in " Lyrical Ballads " was first conceived. The poems were to be weird. At that point Wordsworth had yielded to the persuasive talk of his new friend. Left to his own impulses, he would not, at that time, have entertained such a plan. " The Idiot Boy " appears to me to have been composed in an effort to furnish a counterpart in

weirdness to the "Ancient Mariner." Partly successful as it is, in a curious and rare kind, it nevertheless proves that Wordsworth was happier in the search for unusual aspects of ordinary things when he made the effort in his own way and not in the manner so gloriously used by Coleridge. Another subject the friends had often discussed in Somersetshire was the possibility of giving in poetry something like a systematic illustration of mental science. Here again, of course, the influence of Coleridge predominated; and when Wordsworth, in the fourth part of this complex declaration, says that he proposes "to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature," we may feel sure that such an idea and such a formal expression of it would never have come to him had he not still been, in psychology, dependent upon Coleridge. Even with Wordsworth's psychological classification of his poems before us, with his emphatic distinction between imagination and fancy, we yet feel that there was something not spontaneous and natural about all this. Having once adopted, with Coleridge's assistance, a doctrinaire habit of classifying his impulses, he would be likely to turn it to great account and hold fast to it. Coleridge, on the other hand, might fail, years later, to recognize the child of his own fertile brain. Wordsworth developed the thought that lay in the word "primary," and for this the credit is fully his own.

One may or may not be disappointed in the search for a systematic illustration, in his poetry, of the qualities or functions of the mind; in one respect, however, the service has been very thoroughly rendered: Wordsworth distinguishes what is "primary" in human nature from what is not. He perceives what are "those first affections," both in time and strength, which underlie human feeling; he exalts them as no other poet ever has done. The fifth part of the proposal is even more doctrinal and Coleridgean than the fourth: the primary laws of our nature are to be traced "chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a

state of excitement." Yet it cannot be denied that the theory is amply practised in such poems as "Ruth," "Lucy Gray," and "Michael." Poetry is full of illustrations of this principle; but where shall a more startling one be found than in these two stanzas?

> My horse moved on! hoof after hoof
> He raised, and never stopped:
> When down behind the cottage roof,
> At once, the bright moon dropped.
>
> What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
> Into a Lover's head!
> "O Mercy!" to myself I cried,
> "If Lucy should be dead!"

Unfolding his attack, he speaks with scorn of those poets who "separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites, of their own creation." To associate decadent art with its cause—*i.e.*, with the artist's estrangement from his fellow-men—was to anticipate Tolstoi in the central and most characteristic point of his teaching.

"All good poetry," he continues, "is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling"; yet the greatest poets have been men who, "being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility," have thought long and deeply. Our thoughts are "the representatives of all our past feelings." These poems are distinguished, he says, from the poetry of the day by the fact that "the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation," and not the reverse. He declares that "the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know that one being is elevated above another as he possesses this capability." As causes operating to blunt the sensibilities of men, he mentions the great national events which were then taking place and the growth of cities. Men sought to relieve the monotony

of their daily lives by reading accounts of extraordinary incidents, thus losing their taste for nature and literature. The secret of his style he sums up in a phrase, brief, exact, and comprehensive: " I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject." This does not mean that he professed to pay no attention to style. He achieved style, and achieved it laboriously, by seeking a true and sufficient verbal representation of his subject. He deplores the separation between prose and metrical composition in so far as the so-called poetic diction has stood between writers and the realities they wished to express. The true distinction, he says, lies between poetry and matter of fact, or science, and not between poetry and prose. As he proceeds in his argument his high sense of the value of poetry discloses itself. The poet, he declares, is " a man endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them."

The poet, as Wordsworth conceives him, is not merely a passive instrument of nature. Not Wordsworth but Shelley it is who sings:

> Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is.

Memory trained to service, and an active power of sympathy, are parts of the poet's endowment. They do not require immediate external excitement, but can evoke things absent and conjure up passions resembling those produced by real events. Many philosophers have hesitated to admit that the giving of pleasure is the purpose of poetry. Wordsworth, it is surprising to observe, in spite of the ethical and informing character of his own poetry, never questions this principle. The object of poetry, he says, is truth, but " the poet

writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man." He extends the principle much further, lifting the hedonistic element above the mists and mire of selfishness and setting it upon a level where it is transformed into grateful submission to the law of happiness. Biological science is thus irradiated with mystical faith. " Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure," he says, " be considered as a degradation of the poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere, because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure." There is, he declares, an overbalance of enjoyment even in those sympathies which are excited by pain. And then, in a passage which is probably unsurpassed for its eloquence and its tone of triumph even by the noblest pages of Sidney or Milton, he exclaims:

" The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, ' that he looks

before and after.' He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guide, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man."

Of all the famous interpretations of poetry, this surely is the largest in scope, the most philosophical, the most sympathetic. And as an example of English prose in the grand style, it is equal to the best of Hooker, Milton, Taylor, and Burke, and quite above the highest level of Dryden and Johnson. One ignorant of its date would hesitate to affirm that it was written in either the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. " Things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed "—this is speech of an older vintage, one would say, from which every trace of crudeness, every local taint, everything but what is perfect and immortal, has been removed by " the unimaginable touch of time." But the spirit of the passage is modern. Its recognition of science as the basis of poetry is more than modern; it is prophetic. And so, too, is the perception that the poet carries " everywhere with him relationship and love." We have here, on the one hand, the austere intellectual principle which saved Wordsworth himself from Romanticism, and may yet save the world from the superficial and unreal view of life and art which Romanticism has encouraged; and, on the other hand, a truly religious conception of human solidarity.

Passing over an important defence of the use of verse in writing poetry, we find Wordsworth plunging again into the deeper parts of his subject. Poetry, he tells us, " takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity."

It is thus possible, even when the original sensations were painful, to hold in mind and reproduce creatively only such emotions as will give us an " overbalance of pleasure." He meets the banal objection that had been raised and always will be raised against some of his poems by admitting frankly that his method may sometimes have made it easy for him to give a false importance to matters of particular rather than general interest, and that thus he may have written upon unworthy subjects. He is more apprehensive that his language " may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases, from which no man can altogether protect himself." " Hence," he says, " I have no doubt that, in some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous, may be given to my readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic." With characteristic obstinacy, he argues that it would be unwise to attempt to alter these expressions.

It is appropriate to consider at this point a supplementary statement which Wordsworth added to the Preface for the next edition of " Lyrical Ballads " in 1802. He attributes the use of the so-called poetic diction to the vanity of poets, and especially of poor poets, and to the artificial expectation of readers, who have been led to associate such language with passion and the pleasure derived from passionate expressions. " A language," he declares, " was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the real language of men, *in any situation*." He denounces the abuse of the " pathetic fallacy," by which human feelings are attributed to inanimate objects, and sturdily maintains that in works of imagination and sentiment, " in proportion as ideas and feelings are valuable, whether the composition be in prose or in verse, they require and exact one and the same language." He agrees with Sir Philip Sidney in holding that " metre is but adventitious to composition, and the phraseology for which that passport is necessary, even where it may be graceful at all, will be little valued by the judicious."

John Wilson (Christopher North) was in 1802 a student at Glasgow University. Although only seventeen years old, he took a keen interest in intellectual questions. He was one of the first to see the importance of "Lyrical Ballads," and on May 24, 1802, wrote Wordsworth a long letter, inspired by reverence for his genius and modest questioning as to some of his methods. "That your poetry is the language of Nature," he says, "in my opinion admits of no doubt. Both the thoughts and expressions may be tried by that standard. You have seized upon those feelings that most deeply interest the heart, and that also come within the sphere of common observation. You do not write merely for the pleasure of philosophers and men of improved taste, but for all who think—for all who feel." He praises the poet, in rapturous terms, for his discovery of the "wonderful effect which the appearances of external nature have upon the mind when in a state of strong feeling." Admitting that he was at first incredulous as to the effect of landscape upon human character, he says that upon further consideration this theory has captivated him, and he runs ahead, in eager schoolboy fashion, to surmise that "it serves to explain those diversities in the structure of the mind which have baffled all the ingenuity of philosophers to account for." He begs the poet to confer with him in some broad consideration of this sort. Then he frankly protests that some of Wordsworth's subjects are too particular; they cover events which would have been of no consequence to an unconcerned spectator. It is improper, he thinks, to describe these in poetry. The instance he cites is, of course, "The Idiot Boy."

Although coming from a stranger and evidently from a youth, this letter was so penetrating that Wordsworth felt obliged to answer it seriously and at considerable length. As an apology for not going into even greater detail, he mentions that curious nervous affection which made the physical act of writing difficult for him: "There is scarcely any part in your letter that does not deserve particular notice; but partly from some consti-

tutional infirmities, and partly from certain habits of mind, I do not write any letters except upon business, not even to my dearest friends. Except during absence from my own family, I have not written five letters of friendship during the last five years." He enters minutely into the question of the influence of external nature upon human character, declaring this influence to be very general, though more marked in some regions than in others, and requiring for its most powerful effects " a peculiar sensibility of original organization combining with moral accidents, as is exhibited in The Brothers and Ruth." But he does not flinch from his original statement that the impression of external nature is felt by all human beings: " How dead soever many full-grown men may outwardly seem to these things, all are more or less affected by them; and in childhood, in the first practice and exercise of their senses, they must have been not the nourishers merely, but often the fathers of their passions." This effect is shown, not in individuals merely, but upon the national character of small homogeneous peoples " in tracts of country where images of danger, melancholy, grandeur, or loveliness, softness, and ease prevail." Wordsworth is here attempting to give scientific expression to a popular opinion which has been greatly misused by poets, novelists, and biographers. It is a theory which will not stand a careful test. We derive most of our ideas about national character from imaginative literature, which has been too often coloured by this prepossession. One may well hesitate to protest against even the fullest expansion of an idea so fundamental to Wordsworth's philosophy and so beautifully exemplified in his poetry, especially as there is scarcely an imaginative writer in any literature from whom further illustrations might not be drawn; but surely there is such a thing as what we might call " the scenic fallacy."

The inquiry should be based not only upon the testimony of imaginative writers, who are likely to be peculiarly subject to this fallacy, but upon the events of history, upon observation, upon a survey of the arts and

industries, the military and civic performances, the domestic traits, and the languages of various peoples. We children of the nineteenth century like to feel that—

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

We hold in high esteem the doctrine of inherent qualities, and explain them, if need be, by reference to heredity. Yet perhaps Wordsworth proved himself an acute observer and a true philosopher, by emphasizing the effect of environment. It is at least more encouraging to suppose, with him and other faithful children of the eighteenth century, that impressions from outside are more potent than heredity. This theory brings hope of unlimited improvement, of improvement for a far larger number of human beings than those whom heredity can save. Granting that external natural objects affect human character at all, it is evident, from the constant presence of such objects, that if a race remains for many generations under their influence, the effect must show itself. Other things may pass away—economic arrangements, religious beliefs, culture, government, and all—but mountains will still lift up the hearts of men and draw forth their thoughts, however insensibly. Wordsworth's view was profoundly philosophical. The philosophy was, even in this particular instance, that of the Enlightenment. It contained encouragement for those who believed that humanity could be indefinitely improved through changes from without. And at the back of this active faith lay an assurance that man himself, the object of this process, was fit for development, was essentially perfectible.

There is nowhere in Wordsworth's prose writings a plainer expression of his democratic principles than the part of his letter to Wilson which deals with that young man's objections to "The Idiot Boy." It occurs in a passage so weighty with disregarded truth that it should be carefully read. Moreover, it is pleasant to think of Wordsworth unbosoming himself so modestly and yet

so confidently to his unknown correspondent, and in terms so eloquent:

"You begin what you say upon 'The Idiot Boy' with this observation, that nothing is a fit subject for poetry which does not please. But here follows a question, Does not please whom? Some have little knowledge of natural imagery of any kind, and, of course, little relish for it; some are disgusted with the very mention of the words pastoral poetry, sheep or shepherds; some cannot tolerate a ghost or any supernatural agency in it; others would shrink from an animated description of the pleasures of love, as from a thing carnal and libidinous; some cannot bear to see delicate and refined feelings ascribed to men in low conditions in society; because their vanity and self-love tell them that these belong only to themselves and men like themselves in dress, station, and way of life; others are disgusted with the naked language of some of the most interesting passions of men, because either it is indelicate, or gross, or vulgar; as many fine ladies could not bear certain expressions in 'The Mother' and 'The Thorn,' and, as in the instance of Adam Smith, who, we are told, could not endure the ballad of 'Clym of the Clough,' because the author had not written like a gentleman. Then there are professional and national prejudices for evermore. Some take no interest in the description of a passion or quality, as love of solitariness, we will say, genial activity of fancy, love of nature, religion, and so forth, because they have little or nothing of it in themselves; and so on without end. I return then to the question, Please whom? or what? I answer, human nature as it has been and ever will be. But where are we to find the best measure of this? I answer, from within; by stripping our own hearts naked, and by looking out of ourselves towards men who lead the simplest lives and most according to nature; men who have never known false refinements, wayward and artificial desires, false criticisms, effeminate habits of thinking and feeling, or who, having known these things, have outgrown them. This latter class is the most to be depended upon, but it is very small in number. People in our rank in life are perpetually falling into one sad mistake, namely, that of supposing that human nature and the persons they associate with are one and the same thing. Whom do we generally associate with? Gentlemen, persons of

fortune, professional men, ladies, persons who can afford to buy, or can easily procure books of half-a-guinea price, hot-pressed, and printed upon superfine paper. These persons are, it is true, a part of human nature, but we err lamentably if we suppose them to be fair representatives of the vast mass of human existence. And yet few ever consider books but with reference to their power of pleasing these persons and men of a higher rank; few descend lower, among cottages and fields, and among children. A man must have done this habitually before his judgment upon 'The Idiot Boy' would be in any way decisive with me. I *know* I have done this myself habitually; I wrote the poem with exceeding delight and pleasure, and whenever I read it I read it with pleasure."

Some idea of the seclusion in which the poet lived may be gathered from a letter to Francis Wrangham, written early in 1801, in which he remarks that he has not yet seen the second volume of "Lyrical Ballads," although it has been out a month. "We live," he says, "quite out of the way of new books. I have not seen a single one since I came here, now thirteen months ago." He excuses himself for not going to visit his friend at his parsonage at Hunmanby in Yorkshire, because he is not strong enough to walk, and too poor to ride. Hunmanby is not far from Gallow Hill, where he and his brother John had lately spent three weeks with Mr. Hutchinson, their farmer friend. "Mr. Hutchinson's house," he adds, "is kept by his sister, a woman who is a very particular friend both of my sister and myself. If ever you go that way it would be a great kindness done to me if you would call on them, and also at any future period render them any service in your power: I mean as to lending Miss Hutchinson books, or when you become acquainted with them, performing them any little service, *auprès de Monsieur ou Madame Langley* [Mr. Langley was Mr. Hutchinson's landlord] with respect to their farm. Miss Hutchinson I can recommend to you as a most amiable and good creature, with whom you could converse with great pleasure."

CHAPTER XV

HAPPINESS AND WORK

The great fragment of "The Recluse," which was not all published until 1888, was composed between the end of January and the third week of April, 1800. Wordsworth's reason for setting it aside during his lifetime, after which he intended that "The Prelude" should be printed, was that he hoped to complete the entire "edifice" of which they were to form parts. One magnificent passage he did use, however, in the Preface to "The Excursion," 1814; another, which to be sure sounds unlike the Wordsworth of 1800 and quite in his later and inferior manner, appeared in 1823 with the title "Water Fowl"; and two delightful extracts were published by his heirs in 1851, lines which begin "On Nature's invitation do I come" and "Bleak season was it, turbulent and wild." A temporary subsidence of creative power in 1801, his marriage and other events in 1802, and an impulse to write on local and patriotic subjects which seized him thereafter, caused him to lay aside "The Prelude" until the following year. He found time, however, even in 1802, to compose much of the first two books of "The Excursion." However—and this is a point upon which too much emphasis can scarcely be laid—his political sentiments were still unsettled, and it was impossible for him to proceed, at such a time, with a poem so deeply concerned with politics as "The Prelude." Early in 1801 Coleridge wrote to Poole that he was so much disheartened by "our pestilent commerce, our unnatural crowding of men in cities, and our government by rich men," that he would like to go and settle near Priestley in America if Wordsworth would go with him and they could persuade one or two farmer friends to accompany them. And to Southey

he suggested migrating to the island of Nevis in the West Indies: "I and my family, and you and Edith, and Wordsworth and his sister might all go there and make the Island more illustrious than Cos or Lesbos. . . . Wordsworth would certainly go if I went. By the living God, it is my opinion that we should not leave three such men behind us."

In 1801 and the first half of 1802 the antagonism between Wordsworth's Revolutionary hopes and his patriotism had by no means come to an end. Had he not still retained some of his old sympathy with France, he could not have admired Fox, he could hardly even have kept in friendly relations with Poole. Preliminaries of peace were signed, on October 1, 1801, in terms on the whole disadvantageous to England. France was allowed to retain most of her conquests in Europe. The republics founded by France were recognized. The wars of the Revolution appeared to have come to an end; and we must remember that it was the wars of the Revolution, rather than the principles of the Revolution, that distressed Wordsworth. A great philosophical and cosmopolitan movement had degenerated into an appeal to national feeling, into a lust for conquest. This process seemed at last to have been checked, at whatever cost to his own country. His rapidly diminishing faith in the Revolution must have revived a little. His disillusionment was delayed for a year.

When the treaty of Amiens was finally concluded, in March, 1802, Thomas Poole immediately began to prepare for a visit to the country which had so long provoked his curiosity and aroused his sympathy. A few weeks later he was in Paris, calling on Thomas Paine and on Helen Maria Williams, the Godwinian novelist and Girondist. The peace lasted till May, 1803. During this time Wordsworth, as we shall see, availed himself also of the opportunity to visit France. In the interval, however, it was made plain to him, as to almost all the world, that Napoleon was faithless to the Revolution, and that he had reduced France to bondage. In August, 1802, the tyrant was made Consul for life,

with power to appoint his successor. Immediately there was a change for the worse in French foreign policy. The new Italian "republics" were transformed into satrapies; "agitations" in Switzerland were allayed by a French army; "the chaos of Germany," as Victor Duruy puts it with perhaps unconscious irony, "was simplified" by giving church and municipal property into the hands of princes subservient to the conqueror. An attempt was made to recover Santo Domingo, whence the French brought back nothing except the heroic captive Toussaint l'Ouverture. There was no lack of provocation on either side, and in May, 1803, war between France and England broke out again. This time the very existence of Great Britain as an independent nation was threatened. And the menace came from an undisguised tyranny. Now the conflict of opposed sympathies in Wordsworth's mind was stilled; his duty stood out plain. A great epoch of his life came to an end. Although he continued to be a poet of political ideas, a poet of national and large social interests, the impulse of his thought was to flow henceforth from a different direction. For him the early nineteenth century, with its reactions, its panics, its distrust in rationalism, its backward-looking to the Middle Ages, its checking of the high-hearted Renaissance, began during the ominous pause that followed the treaty of Amiens, when "*ce siècle avait deux ans.*" It was in a sense the negative side he went over to, the timid Tory side. Perhaps that was a more satisfactory choice than if he had thrown himself into the current of what was then deemed the progressive movement, the middle-class industrial movement, in which the clear and unimpaired strain of Revolutionary philosophy was scarcely to be recognized. High conservatism, with its historic background, and bold radicalism, with its appeal to the future, are both of them fit air for poets to breathe, but the thick and low-creeping atmosphere of a policy whose only object is to increase the wealth of a nation can only asphyxiate art of every kind.

For yet another reason, the year 1802 marked the

end of old things and the beginning of new in the life of Wordsworth, for this year is a breathing-place in the march of English literature. One stage had just been finished; another was about to begin. The death of Erasmus Darwin, following close upon that of Cowper in 1800, Burke in 1797, and Burns in 1796, served to remind men that a great generation, with many sources of mutual understanding, had stopped at the threshold of the inn. Apart from Wordsworth and Coleridge, poetry at least seemed poorly represented in the company that was preparing to set forth again. Southey wrote "works," but failed to represent fresh ideas or to stimulate. He was, in spite of all his efforts, out of touch with life, and a notable example of how little mere literary industry avails unless the writer's heart is on fire with some kind of flame, infernal or divine. The slight performances of Thomas Moore were just what might have been expected in an interval between great acts of the intellectual drama. By the end of the year, it is true, a literary event of the utmost importance had occurred, but one the significance of which was not at that time readily grasped: Scott's "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" had begun to issue from the press. But "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," first of his poetical romances, was not to appear until three years later, and "Waverley" not till 1814. Crabbe was too old to make any really new poetical venture. Blake had written most of his Lays and Visions, and was henceforth to body forth his conceptions in design. It was a propitious moment for pronouncing an eloquent apology for poetry and uttering a fresh and arresting opinion on poetical technique. This Wordsworth had done, and now, when the political contradictions in his heart had ceased to torture him, he entered upon a new era of poetic productiveness.

There was another side to his life in the quiet year 1801—the idyllic. It is beautifully described in his sister's Journal. Her brief notes touch chiefly upon the infinite details of nature, her brother's work, her perfect love of him, and the mysterious depths of her affection

for Coleridge. One learns from her what a boundless source of delight there is in the life of *things*. It is not merely that she happened to be dwelling in one of the loveliest and most varied regions in all the world; she would have discovered wonders anywhere. She had eyes to see and a soul to comprehend. Her curiosity was as intense as Gilbert White's of Selborne, though, of course, she had no scientific purpose or method. Love was her only impulse in all she did. There is an almost complete absence of the kind of reflection which is commonly called "religious." She apparently felt no need of an historical revelation. She listened continually to a great theodicy. Her daily life was worship. In service to those about her, in sharing their burdens, lightening their cares, looking after their welfare and happiness, she found abundant exercise for her sense of duty. With self-control equal to her brother's, she refrained from speculating about what was most painful or inexplicable in her experience. There is hardly a phrase in her Journal that could be called sentimental, though of wild joy and of sorrow and disappointment the traces are not few. We prate about communion with nature and about the healing touch of nature. Here was a young woman of thirty who really sought and found companionship, strength, restoration, and joy, in nature. Sometimes the hand of conscious art is visible in what she writes; we perceive that she is making studies of scenes and incidents with a view to providing material for her brother. More often she puts down artlessly what she sees, for its own sake, as one instinctively plucks a beautiful spring flower.

Of her deliberate pictures, nothing could be more delicate in its union of quick observation with imaginative understanding, or more exquisite in literary form, than the following passage:

"*Tuesday, 24th* [*October*, 1801].—It was very windy, and we heard the wind everywhere about us as we went along the lane, but the walls sheltered us. . . . As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance perhaps of 50 yards from our favourite birch-tree.

It was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs. The sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water. The sun went in, and it resumed its purplish appearance, the twigs still yielding to the wind, but not so visibly to us. The other birch-trees that were near it looked bright and cheerful, but it was a creature by its own self among them."

She gives us more than one instance of her brother's extreme sensitiveness to impressions. Here is something he would have been too reticent to tell the world. One evening there came " bad news from poor C. [C. is always Coleridge]: William went to John's Grove. I went to find him. Moonlight, but it rained. . . . He had been surprised, and terrified, by a sudden rushing of winds, which seemed to bring earth, sky, and lake together, as if the whole were going to enclose him in. He was glad he was in the high road." More often it is the old story of his exhaustion after composing poetry, such as the record on December 23: " William worked at ' The Ruined Cottage ' and made himself very ill;" or later, on February 2, 1802: " William wished to break off composition, but was unable, and so did himself harm. . . . After tea I read aloud the eleventh book of ' Paradise Lost.' We were much impressed and also melted into tears. The papers came in soon after I had laid aside the book—a good thing for my Wm."

Her gift, perhaps unmatched outside Japan, of making a nature poem with the smallest possible number of words, can be seen in such a passage as this: " Attempted Fairfield [the great mountain behind Grasmere], but misty, and we went no further than Green Head Gill to the sheepfold; mild, misty, beautifully soft;" or this: " The snow hid all the grass, and all signs of vegetation, and the rocks showed themselves boldly everywhere and seemed more stony than rock or stone." She described minutely the travellers who stopped at their door or whom they met in the road, beggars, peddlers, gipsies, discharged sailors, and other wanderers. This, we feel sure, was done for William's sake.

Mary Hutchinson was a guest at Dove Cottage during almost the whole of the last three months of the year 1801, and part of that time her brother Tom was there too. Coleridge had his room there, coming without warning and departing with reluctance. But the restless fit was on him. He could never stay long with his family at Keswick, even when his friends were only fourteen miles away and he might visit them as long as he pleased. He was racked with physical pain and mental distress. The opium habit held him by this time tight in its clutches, and I have very little doubt Wordsworth, though perhaps no one else, knew what was the matter. He was ashamed of not making a better provision for his family. He was more than ashamed of not giving to the world a fuller harvest of his genius. He persuaded himself that in London, under the dsicipline of an engagement to furnish a daily article to some newspaper, he might recover command of his powers. And beyond London he pictured to himself the strong personality of Thomas Poole. And so, with money sent by Poole, he set out, November 10, on this desperate adventure. The Wordsworths understood its perils. They knew what anguish drove him forth, and how his loving heart would suffer the moment his back was turned. They knew how dependent he was upon such bodily comforts, such counsel, and such spiritual control, as they had been wont to give him. And they would miss him. On that day Dorothy wrote:

"Poor C. left us, and we came home together. We left Keswick at 2 o'clock, and did not arrive at Grasmere till 9 o'clock. I burnt myself with Coleridge's aqua-fortis. [He had been dabbling in chemistry, as much out of friendship with Davy as out of curiosity.] C. had a sweet day for his ride. Every sight and every sound reminded me of him—dear, dear fellow, of his many talks to us, by day and by night, of all dear things. I was melancholy, and could not talk, but at last I eased my heart by weeping—' nervous blubbering,' says William. It is not so. Oh, how many, many reasons have I to be anxious for him!"

Her solicitude never slept. Nearly every day she mentions writing to the absent friend or hearing from him.

November 11: "Put aside dearest C.'s letters." November 16: "I am going to write to Coleridge and Sara. Poor C.! I hope he was in London yesterday." November 20: "In the evening we had cheerful letters from Coleridge and Sara." November 21: "We walked in the morning, and paid one pound and 4d. for letters. William out of spirits."* November 22: "We wrote to Coleridge." November 24: "We had a note from Mrs. C., with bad news from poor C.—very ill." November 25: "I baked bread, and wrote to Sara Hutchinson and Coleridge." December 3: "I wrote a little bit of my letter to Coleridge." December 4: "I finished the letter to Coleridge, and we received a letter from him and Sara.† C.'s letter written in good spirits. A letter of Lamb's about George Dyer with it." December 6: "In the afternoon we sate by the fire: I read Chaucer aloud, and Mary read the first canto of 'The Fairy Queen.' After tea Mary and I walked to Ambleside for letters. . . . It was a sober starlight evening. The stars not shining as it were with all their brightness when they were visible, and sometimes hiding themselves behind small greying clouds, that passed soberly along. We opened C.'s letter at Wilcock's door. We thought we saw that he wrote in good spirits, so we came happily homewards, where we arrived 2 hours after we left home. It was a sad, melancholy letter, and prevented us all from sleeping."

The next day they rose by candlelight and set off in rain and snow to Keswick to see Mrs. Coleridge and the children, in order, doubtless, to be able to tell Coleridge how they were. This time they rode, and Dorothy

* No wonder! Postage, which was very high, was paid by the recipient, and was a heavy tax on intelligence. Some of the richest people enjoyed the franking privilege. Many peculiar circumstances in the correspondence of that time can be readily understood if we remember these facts. Coleridge suggested a computation of the domestic loss, the crippling of talent, and the injustice, occasioned by this unfair burden.

† This refers to Sara Hutchinson. It is to her, and not to Mrs. Coleridge, that the name is applied in the Journal, where she is often mentioned in connection with Coleridge. He, it would seem, wrote to her frequently at this time, and she passed his letters on to the Wordsworths.

was not too tired on her return to write to him late at night. December 9: "I finished a letter to C." On the 12th she and William and Mary went out together, and she noted: "The birches on the crags beautiful, red brown and glittering. The ashes glittering spears with their upright stems. The hips very beautiful, and so good! and, dear Coleridge! I ate twenty for thee when I was by myself. I came home first. They walked too slow for me." This is the only allusion she makes to the love-affair going on before her eyes. Her innocent girlish action when she was by herself shows where her own heart was.

December 13: "The boy brought letters from Coleridge, and from Sara. Sara in bad spirits about C." December 14: "Wm. and Mary walked to Ambleside in the morning to buy mousetraps. . . . I wrote to Coleridge a very long letter while they were absent." December 18: "I wrote to Coleridge." "Monday, 21st, being the shortest day, Mary walked to Ambleside for letters. It was a wearisome walk, for the snow lay deep upon the roads, and it was beginning to thaw. I stayed at home. Wm. sate beside me, and read 'The Pedlar' [*i.e.*, part of "The Excursion"]. He was in good spirits, and full of hope of what he should do with it. He went to meet Mary, and they brought four letters—two from Coleridge, one from Sara, and one from France. Coleridge's were melancholy letters. He had been very ill. We were made very unhappy. Wm. wrote to him, and directed the letter into Somersetshire. I finished it after tea. In the afternoon Mary and I ironed." December 22: "We were very sad about Coleridge." December 23: "Mary wrote out the Tales from Chaucer for Coleridge." December 25: "*Christmas Day* [her thirtieth birthday]. We received a letter from Coleridge. His letter made us uneasy about him. I was glad I was not by myself when I received it." December 26: "Poor Coleridge, Sara, and dear little Derwent [Coleridge's child], here last year at this time. After tea we sate by the fire comfortably. I read aloud 'The Miller's Tale.' Wrote to Coleridge. . . . Wm. wrote part of the poem to Coleridge."

On Monday, December 28, William, Mary, and Dorothy, set off on foot to Keswick with some cold

mutton in their pockets. This they reinforced with roasted apples and the smell of Christmas pies at Wythburn Inn. They had been invited to visit Thomas Clarkson, the abolitionist, who lived at Eusemere, at the northern end of Ullswater. Spending a night at Greta Hall with Mrs. Coleridge and the children, they pushed ahead next day, looking back at "dear Coleridge's desert home," and thinking of him. Mary spent the next day with them at Mr. Clarkson's, and then went on to her relatives in Penrith, six miles farther, but returned on January 3 to bring letters from Sara and Coleridge. She was with the party again from the 17th to the 22nd. The Clarksons were an extremely friendly couple, Mrs. Clarkson having a fund of old-fashioned stories and being a woman of a very romantic and imaginative temperament.

William and Dorothy returned to Grasmere, without Mary, on January 23, 1802. To anyone acquainted with Grisedale Pass, her record of the journey is full of interest. They set out on the same horse, accompanied by Mr. Clarkson, from whom they parted on the Ullswater side at one o'clock; and then, on foot, through rain and hail and snow, lost at times in the clouds, and guided by William's skill, which needed no visible track, they toiled on, till they reached a point whence they saw the vale of Grasmere, when the mists broke away, looking "soft and grave, of a yellow hue." At home, in their own snug nest, they gazed about them and felt that they were happy.

And thus ended a season of comparative unproductiveness for Wordsworth. We must remember that it included a great part of his courtship. His sister says nothing about this; it must have given her a mingled sense of unselfish pleasure and painful apprehension. She foresaw that the day of her felicity might be near its close.

Immediately on this return to his old home and to a life of entire seclusion with his sister, Wordsworth entered upon a period of ardent and successful composition, which lasted, with few and short interruptions,

until 1807. Fully half of the published extracts from Dorothy's Journal were written in the one year 1802. We have, therefore, uncommonly full and accurate knowledge of the origins of the poems written in that year. In the case of no other great poet has the personal background of his work been so completely revealed—the incidents that suggested it, the purposes that inspired it, the methods that gave it form; for no other poet has had such a companion. The record begins with frequent statements that William was "tired with composition," a good sign, for it means that he was driven by inspiration. He was working at "The Excursion." They were on friendly terms, however, with the humble folk who lived near them, the carters and carriers who passed their door, and the dwellers on remote farms. Every few days they helped some poor wayfarer plodding between the seacoast and the inland towns. They listened to the tale of distress, shared their plain meal with the hungry, and gave of their scanty money to the poor. Newspapers were few, and were carefully kept on file.

Occasionally, to Dorothy's relief, William "wasted his mind in the Magazines." They read little, however, except Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson, if we may judge from her jottings. Jonson's short poems were "too interesting for him," she tells us, "and would not let him go to sleep." They dipped into a box of books that came from London, trying Fletcher and Thomas Fuller and Smollett. Dorothy studied German and attempted to translate (into verse, perhaps) some of Lessing's fables. She sometimes wrote snatches of poetry, but was dissatisfied with the result. Now and then came a "heart-rending letter from Coleridge." His growing estrangement from his wife was the more lamentable because she had no very positive faults and he was devoted to the children. No doubt, in his saddest letters he dwelt on this subject and on his health. It required infinite patience to receive his complaints with sympathy, and a boundless supply of energy to encourage and counsel him. To the outer

world Wordsworth appeared in later life impassive. What strikes one most forcibly in reading his sister's Journal is the extreme sensibility of them both. A melancholy letter from their friend made them ill. Reading a fine passage in Milton melted them to tears.

William composed under demonic influence, and at such times Dorothy withdrew to suffer in silent fear. Her "apprehensions came in crowds." The intensity of his feelings was redoubled when they passed into her less robust heart. It has always been said by the Wordsworth family and their intimate friends—and I have heard it said myself by one who knew both her and her brother*—that the cause of her mental breakdown in later life was the physical strain she endured in taking long walks. Her outdoor life would seem rather to have preserved her from breaking down sooner, for it was inevitable that such quivering sympathies, such lively feelings, should play havoc. She never spared herself, and the truth is that her brother blindly allowed her not only to share his own intellectual pains, but to do too much of the humbler toil of copying his poems and writing his letters. In default of social dissipation, the only thing that preserved both him and her from complete prostration was constant bodily exercise, accompanied, as it was, with interest in the details of what they saw. She suffered, no doubt, from doing so much household work, in addition to long tramps and the intense intellectual life she lived. Many a time, though wearied with mental exertion and exhausted from household business, she started for walks of many miles, but the walks themselves were the least part of the danger. The question of how far her spiritual balance was overthrown by the strain of controlling her feelings about Coleridge is too delicate to be discussed. What could be more affecting—or more alarming, the intensity of her nature considered—than her eager watching for his letters and the grief they usually called forth? Coming home one evening from the post-office at Ambleside or Rydal, she writes: "We broke the seal

* Miss Arnold of Fox How.

of Coleridge's letters, and I had light enough just to see that he was not ill. I put it in my pocket. At the top of the White Moss I took it to my bosom—a safer place for it."

Mary Hutchinson was still at Penrith. Her lover had not seen her for nearly a month, but one Sunday morning, February 14, "the fine day pushed him on to resolve," and after some persuasion, it seems, from his sister, "off he went in his blue spencer and a pair of new pantaloons fresh from London." He returned two days later, and "had only seen Mary H. for a couple of hours between Eamont Bridge and Hartshorn Tree." He brought back the story of "Alice Fell," which had been told him by Mr. Graham, a friend of Clarkson's, who "urged him to put it into verse for humanity's sake." Dorothy at once wrote out the incident in full, and about a month later the poem was composed. Through January and February great pains were taken in revising and completing "Peter Bell." But "The Pedlar"—*i.e.*, "The Excursion"—was their main concern for many months, and a typical entry in the Journal is as follows: "I was so unlucky as to propose to rewrite 'The Pedlar.' Wm. got to work, and was worn to death."

On March 4 William Calvert sent a servant with horses, and Wordsworth went to Keswick for a visit of several days, leaving a supply of fresh pens and some poems put in order for writing by his faithful amanuensis. His back was no sooner turned than she began to long for him. "I *will* be busy," she writes; "I *will* look well and be well when he comes back to me. O the Darling! here is one of his bitten apples. I can hardly find it in my heart to throw it into the fire. . . . I walked round the two Lakes, crossed the stepping-stones at Rydale Foot. Sate down where we always sit. I was full of thought about my darling. Blessings on him." This was put in the Journal less than three hours after his departure, and she wrote him a letter that night and received one from him next day. He brought home two new stanzas of "Ruth." Within a week, it is a

pleasure to know, he wrote the exquisite lines "To a Butterfly," beginning "Stay near me—do not take thy flight," which contain a touching reminiscence of their childhood at Cockermouth, and must have made her fond heart melt with happiness. In the meanwhile he had been working at "The Singing Bird," later called "The Sailor's Mother," a poem which followed "nearly to the letter" a story told him by a woman he had recently met near their cottage. He was also writing the poem now called "Beggars," and then known as "The Beggar Woman and the Beggar Boy." For this he used the very minute account of an incident narrated in Dorothy's Journal nearly three years before. "I read to William," she says, "that account of the little boy belonging to the tall woman, and an unlucky thing it was, for he could not escape from those very words, and so he could not write the poem. He left it unfinished, and went tired to bed. In our walk from Rydale he had got warm with the subject and had half cast the poem." Again she tells how "William kindled and began to write." She was often in a trembling ecstasy, between joy and pain, but there were long intervals of tranquil time, filled, as one could wish all of life to be filled, with a well-balanced proportion of physical and intellectual effort. Her brother was more independent, but had fewer resources outside of his own mind.

On March 18 a stir was in the air. Coleridge had arrived in the north. Wordsworth seems to have gone out on that day and the next to look for him, but he came to Dove Cottage unexpectedly, when it was raining so hard that Dorothy "did not wish for nor expect him." She writes: "His eyes were a little swollen with the wind. I was much affected by the sight of him. He seemed half stupefied." This would seem to show that she did not yet suspect the real cause of his peculiar appearance.

The grand talks of old recommenced, with a dispute about Ben Jonson, but after Coleridge had gone to bed, his friends sat up till four o'clock, and Dorothy adds:

"My spirits were agitated very much." Possibly William on this occasion enlightened her as to Coleridge's condition.

Their wonderful visitor stayed only two days, returning to his family at Keswick. The result of the reunion at Dove Cottage was a strengthening of his self-control, and, as usual, an increase of productive energy and versatility in Wordsworth. The latter wrote "The Cuckoo" a day or two after Coleridge left them, one of his most musical poems—"O blithe new-comer, I have heard"; and before the week was out, he followed it with the lines, of similar joyousness and melody:

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky,

and began, on "a divine morning," an ode, which must have been no other than the great "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of early Childhood."

But something of Coleridge's restlessness had remained with them, for this glorious activity was interrupted on March 28 to begin a round of visits. Going first to Calvert's, near Keswick, where they met the Coleridges, they spent a week on the way to Thomas Clarkson's, and here Dorothy remained eight days, while her brother went to the Hutchinsons in Yorkshire. On April 13 he returned, having composed and written "The Glow-worm"—*i.e.* the lines beginning "Among all lovely things my love had been." The poet's nephew, in the "Memoirs" (Vol. I., p. 186), quotes from a letter, now lost, written by Wordsworth to Coleridge in April, 1802: "The incident of this poem took place about seven years ago between my sister and me." The verses were printed in 1807, but never again during Wordsworth's lifetime, which is remarkable, considering their beauty. They belong among the mysterious "Lucy poems." In her Journal, under date of the 20th, Dorothy, however, records with great particularity that he wrote them on horseback, on the 12th, near the town of Staindrop, "on Monday, 12th April, 1802." It is very unusual for her to be so exact in giving a date.

They walked home from Eusemere, by way of Kirkstone Pass, on the 15th and 16th. On the first of these days they saw the " host of golden daffodils " which suggested the lovely poem, " I wandered lonely as a cloud "; and on the second day, at the foot of Brothers Water, Dorothy " found William writing a poem descriptive of the sights and sounds we saw and heard," which must have been the joyous lines:

> The cock is crowing,
> The stream is flowing, etc.

The place has not changed. The bridge, bristling with rue and spleenwort, still spans the rushing brook where William sat, and one can follow the shady path up which Dorothy strolled to have a peep at the arched windows of Hartsop Hall. Every particular of the clear-cut little poem remains as it was. How exactly the brother and sister saw things ! The depth of their feelings can be measured by the truth of their perceptions. The precision of their expressions was due to the intensity of their experience, and this was intense because it was simple.

The poem on the daffodils was not written until many months afterward, but, with the very great exception of its musical form and its indwelling thought, so amply illustrating " the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement," its elements are present in Dorothy's description, to which he no doubt turned. This is the *locus classicus* in her whole Journal, and is so often quoted to show the co-operation of their minds that I almost hesitate to copy it once more:

" When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. We fancied that the sea had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and above them; some rested their heads

on these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway."

Two days after their return to their own cottage and orchard, Wordsworth wrote the quaint little poem, somewhat in Blake's manner, called "The Redbreast Chasing the Butterfly." "We left out some lines," says his sister, as if she associated herself with him in its authorship. That week Coleridge, as usual, came to them. He "repeated the verses he wrote to Sara." "I was affected by them," we read in the Journal, "and in miserable spirits. The sunshine, the green fields, and the fair sky made me sadder; even the little happy, sporting lambs seemed but sorrowful to me." What poem was this? Professor Knight conjectures, but apparently without any evidence, that it may have been "the first draft of Dejection, an Ode, in its earliest and afterwards abandoned form." Probably it has not been preserved. We must again remind ourselves that the Sara from whom letters were constantly arriving, and often in connection with Coleridge's, and of whom, for example, Dorothy writes, during this visit of his, "We wished for Mary and Sara. . . . C. received a letter from Sara," was Sara Hutchinson. While Sara Hutchinson belonged to the inmost circle, poor Mrs. Coleridge's company was never sought by the Wordsworths, for its own sake, and rarely indeed by her husband. An entry in the Journal for May 6 reads: "When we came in we found a magazine, and review, and a letter from Coleridge, verses to Hartley, and Sara H."

Whoever thinks it necessary to *see* the discord and misery of Coleridge's home life has only to read that portion of his long letter to Southey written July 29, 1802,* in which he refers to Mrs. Coleridge's "inveterate

* E. H. Coleridge, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 389.

habits of puny thwarting and unintermitting dyspathy." They were an ill-mated pair, each no doubt trying to make up for an enormous disparity of tastes by repentances and sacrifice, which resulted in frequent reconcilement but no permanent happiness.

On April 20 Wordsworth had added to his poem "To a Butterfly" the lines beginning "I've watched you now a full half-hour," which have always been published separately, and have been improperly dated in a Fenwick note. After Coleridge's visit, which lasted five days, he composed "The Tinker"* and the lines entitled "Foresight." He was evidently, as his classification later goes to prove, trying to put into permanent form as many as possible of his childhood recollections, and this is one of the Poems referring to the Period of Childhood. On April 30 and May 1 he wrote "The Celandine," published in 1807 as two separate poems. On May 3 he began to compose "The Leech Gatherer," known also by the less interesting title "Resolution and Independence," and continued it next morning. None of his poems exhausted him more than this, and no wonder, for it gave an outlet to those fears which nowhere else escaped him—fears of poverty, of futility, of madness even. In few of his poems does he attain so great perfection of form. In none is there a figure so elaborate and yet so finished as the double simile of the huge stone, "like a sea-beast crawled forth." Considering the scrupulous principles of his art, his extreme care to preserve the lineaments of truth in every detail, and to harmonize the form of his poems to the particular mode they were intended to express, it is plain that this poem must have cost him dear in both emotion and artistic effort. Before it was finished, Coleridge joined them again, at the Rock of Names,† between Grasmere and Keswick, and they had an afternoon

* It is in Nowell C. Smith's edition, III. 423.

† The initials W. W., M. H., D. W., S. T. C., J. W., and S. H., were carved on a rock by the shore of Thirlmere. Owing to the change of level when the lake was made into a reservoir, this precious memorial was taken down and replaced at a higher point. Unfortunately, it was much damaged in the process, but some of the letters may still be seen.

together. From him, perhaps, was caught the tone of melancholy, from which Wordsworth's other poems, written that happy spring-time, were conspicuously free. On May 7 Dorothy records that her brother "fell to work at The Leech Gatherer; he wrote hard at it till dinner-time, then he gave over, tired to death—he had finished the poem." His high-strung condition betrayed itself next day, for when she read "Henry V." to him in the orchard he wept. And the poem was not so soon finished, after all, for on the 9th he worked at it "almost incessantly from morning till tea-time." "I was oppressed," she says, "and sick at heart, for he wearied himself to death." But this time it was really done, and she copied it and other poems for Coleridge.

As usual, however, Wordsworth, still in the glow of completing one task, began another, and that same evening he "wrote two stanzas in the manner of Thomson's Castle of Indolence, and was tired out." The day closed with bad news from Coleridge. The two stanzas were no doubt a portion of that enigmatical poem beginning "Within our happy Castle there dwelt One." Considering the playful tone of these verses, it is astonishing to read of the toil Wordsworth bestowed on them. "William is still at work," his sister writes next day, "though it is past ten o'clock; he will be tired out, I am sure. My heart fails me." That night he could not sleep, but on the third day she records that he "finished the poem about C. and himself."

Coleridge came again on the 12th. "We sate up," the Journal says, "till one o'clock all together, then William went to bed, and I sate with C. in the sitting-room (where he slept) till a quarter past two o'clock." When Coleridge was not with them, there was an almost daily interchange of letters. His were melancholy, and caused great uneasiness. For example, on May 15 Dorothy writes: "We had a melancholy letter from Coleridge at bedtime. It distressed me very much, and I resolved upon going to Keswick the next day." She went, alone, on the 17th, and spent two days, Coleridge bringing her halfway home on the 19th. They found

him again beside the Keswick road, on the 22nd, " sitting under Sara's rock." He poured out his heart about his private affairs, and came home with them for two days. He was with them again from June 9 to 12.

My belief that Wordsworth's love for France and sympathetic interest in her affairs still persisted receives support from the sonnet beginning " I grieved for Buonaparté," which is doubtless one of the two referred to as follows on May 21: " William wrote two sonnets on Buonaparte, after I had read Milton's sonnets to him "; and also more strongly from a remark, under date of February 8: " Coleridge's letter somewhat damped us. It spoke with less confidence about France." Coleridge had completely gone over to the side of " patriotism." The sonnet seems at most to express grief that a nation should expect true guidance from a man trained in battles, but there is a noticeable absence of hostility to France. It was printed in *The Morning Post* for September 16, 1802, unsigned, and on January 29, 1803, with the initials W. L. D., and incorrectly dated 1801 in Wordsworth's editions of his poems.

On June 18 came news that Lord Lowther intended to pay the debt due to their father. Immediately letters on this subject were despatched to Coleridge, Mary Hutchinson, and Richard Wordsworth, the brother in London. The poet, now obliged to attend to business, and realizing that he was no longer too poor to marry, hastened away to Eusemere to consult his experienced friend Clarkson. One can imagine the excitement at Dove Cottage in his absence: a letter from Basil Montagu, who seems to have been their adviser in money matters, and one from Richard, bewildering the poor girl so that she " could settle to nothing "; her brother Christopher to be informed; recourse to Shakespeare to steady herself; and then in comes Coleridge, for whom she must cook supper and make ready a room. But she was not too tired to sit up and hear him talk till one o'clock. He came again, before the end of the month and the letters went back and forth as usual.

CHAPTER XVI

MARRIAGE

In June Wordsworth wrote the gay and humorous lines beginning "The sun has long been set," which contain an allusion, I think, to one of Charles Lamb's eulogies of London life as compared with country pleasures, and wrought at the great Intimations Ode. He also sent an elaborate reply, as we have seen, to John Wilson, of Glasgow. But what seems to have busied him most was the touching poem composed in anticipation of leaving Grasmere and breaking up the old life with his sister, the lines beginning "Farewell, thou little Nook of mountain ground." The time had come when he was able to marry. There is no reason to doubt the reality of his affection for Mary Hutchinson. Nothing in his existing letters, however, or in Dorothy's Journal, gives the slightest indication that, up to this time at least, it had risen to the height of a passion. Surely if his soul had been possessed with an overwhelming happy love, his sister, so unselfish, so observant, so exact and unflinching in what she wrote, would have revealed the fact. This poem is not the cry of an eager lover, but rather the farewell of a man reluctant to give up a blessed certainty of happiness, almost an apology to the sister who has been the companion of his past, and a promise that the future shall see as little change in their life as possible.

On the evening of July 8 poor Dorothy wrote in her Journal: "O beautiful place! dear Mary, William. The hour is come. . . . I must prepare to go. The swallows, I must leave them, the wall, the garden, the roses, all. Dear creatures! they sang last night after I was in bed; seemed to be singing to one another, just before they settled to rest for the night. Well, I must

go. Farewell." And on July 9 they set out together for the Hutchinsons' place, Gallow Hill, near Scarborough, Yorkshire. Coleridge was watching for them at Sara's Rock. They spent two nights at Keswick, and had a melancholy parting with their friend. On the way to Eusemere, where they stayed two days with the Clarksons, they lingered and loitered that they might be alone. On the 16th they reached Gallow Hill, having travelled partly by post-chaise and partly on foot.

And now, instead of marrying his betrothed, what did this strange lover do, after a visit of ten days, but start off to France with his sister! To an attentive reader of the Journal, this is not so surprising as it might be to one who had failed to observe certain mysterious allusions, and a few words in a letter written by Dorothy to Mrs. Marshall, November 30, 1795, shortly after her arrival at Racedown. "William," she says, "has had a letter from France since we came here. Annette mentions having dispatched half a dozen, none of which he has received." In her Journal on December 21, 1801, she mentions the receipt of a letter from France. On January 26, 1802, she says: "Wm. wrote to Annette." On February 13 there came a letter "from the Frenchman in London," and on the 15th "a letter from Annette." Under date of February 22 we find: "Wm. brought me 4 letters to read—from Annette and Caroline, Mary and Sara and Coleridge;" and on February 24 "Wm. wrote to Annette." On March 22 we find the following entry, in which going to Mary is connected with seeing Annette: "A rainy day. Wm. very poorly. 2 letters from Sara and one from poor Annette. Wrote to my brother Richard [a rare occurrence]. We talked a good deal about C. and other interesting things. We resolved to see Annette, and that Wm. should go to Mary." On the 26th "Wm. wrote to Annette." As we saw, Wordsworth went into Yorkshire early in April.

And now, in July, leaving Mary on the 26th, they went, by way of Hull, Lincoln, and Peterborough, to London, where they arrived on the 29th. Two days later, "after various troubles and disasters," they left

London on the Dover coach at half-past five or six. "It was a beautiful morning," she wrote. "The city, St. Paul's, with the river, and a multitude of little boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses were not overhung by their cloud of smoke, and they were spread out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a fierce light, that there was even something like the purity of one of nature's own grand spectacles." It was in this hour that Wordsworth began to compose the famous sonnet, one of his earliest, beginning "Earth has not anything to show more fair." In his own editions he mistakenly states that it was composed September 3, but in the Fenwick note he says it was "written on the roof of a coach, on my way to France."

Sailing from Dover that night, they reached Calais at four o'clock on Sunday morning, August 1. Dorothy's brief account of this visit, which appears to have been confined to Calais, was not written until her return to Grasmere. Nothing is said as to its purpose. "We found Annette and C." she writes, "chez Madame Avril dans la Rue de la Tête d'or. . . . We walked by the seashore almost every evening with Annette and Caroline, or William and I alone. . . . One night I shall never forget—the day had been very hot, and William and I walked alone together upon the pier." She describes the scene, and adds, as if she and William had not really been alone: "Caroline was delighted." This was probably the occasion of his writing the sonnet, "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free," and the "dear Child! dear girl!" that walked with them there, "untouched by solemn thought," is, of course, not his sister, who was only too easily affected by such sights. The seven other sonnets composed at or near Calais during this sojourn are all of a political character, and a close examination of them discloses the trend of Wordsworth's feelings on the great subject which had run like a deep undertone through all his adult life. The Consulship for life was granted to Napoleon on August 2. By the 7th the news had reached Calais, and on that day

Wordsworth wrote his remonstrance to the "men of prostrate minds" who had thus demonstrated their proneness to slavery, the sonnet beginning "Is it a reed that's shaken by the wind." On the same day, "on the road leading to Ardres," he composed the sonnet beginning "Jones! as from Calais southward you and I," in which he contrasts the high hopes, the songs, garlands, mirth, banners, and happy faces, of the time "when faith was pledged to new-born Liberty" with the disheartened state of the French now. He distinctly avers, however, that he himself has not given up. "Despair," he sings,

> Touches me not, though pensive as a bird
> Whose vernal coverts winter hath laid bare.

France had been, indeed, his vernal covert. These two lines, however, were substituted in 1827 for the original, which indicate even more clearly the undaunted attitude of his mind, and are as follows:

> Yet despair
> I feel not: happy am I as a bird:
> Fair seasons yet will come, and hopes as fair.

On Napoleon's birthday, the 15th, he composed the sonnet beginning "Festivals have I seen that were not names." He compares the present apathy with the sublime though senseless joy he had witnessed "in a prouder time," and concludes:

> Happy is he, who, caring not for Pope,
> Consul, or King, can sound himself to know
> The destiny of Man, and live in hope.

His revolt against the Napoleonic tyranny shows itself again in the glorious sonnet "On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic," in that upon "The King of Sweden," and in that "To Toussaint l'Ouverture." And, by a natural return of the mind to his own country, whose white cliffs by day and lighthouses at night reminded him that she was unconquered, he felt a new-born pride in her, which he expressed in the sonnet beginning "Fair Star of evening, Splendour of the west."

The sway which France had so long held in his heart was now broken. The abasement of her people before a man who represented in a fresh form the bondage they had thrown off, only a few years before, lowered them in his eyes. France no longer seemed to him the champion of liberty. England, in comparison, was a land of freedom. Henceforth he founded his affections upon his own country. Whatever its result, the visit to Calais was undoubtedly undertaken for the sole purpose of making a settlement with Annette, and bidding farewell to her and the child, who was now nine years old.

On Sunday, August 29, exactly four weeks after their arrival at Calais, the Wordsworths sailed back to Dover, where they sat upon the cliffs and "looked upon France with many a melancholy and tender thought," as Dorothy records. They reached London the next day. We catch a glimpse of them in a letter from Charles Lamb to Coleridge dated September 8, in which he says: "The Wordsworths are at Montagu's rooms, near neighbours to us. They dined with us yesterday, and I was their guide to Bartlemy Fair." The Lambs had been in the Lake country during the Wordsworths' absence, visiting Coleridge. They had stayed a day or two at Dove Cottage, together with the Clarksons, although the inmates were away, and had only just returned to London, as we learn from a letter of Lamb to his friend Manning, dated September 24. In the same letter he says: "The Wordsworths were gone to Calais. They have since been in London, and past much time with us: he is now gone to Yorkshire to be married to a girl of small fortune, but he is in expectation of augmenting his own in consequence of the death of Lord Lonsdale, who kept him out of his own in conformity with a plan milord had taken up in early life, of making everybody unhappy." In her Journal, Dorothy Wordsworth records that she and her brother stayed in London till Wednesday, September 22, and arrived at Gallow Hill on Friday. In a letter from this place to Mrs. Marshall, dated September 29, only part of which has ever been printed, she

says they were detained in London by a succession of unexpected events—the arrival of their brother Christopher, then of their brother John. The latter had recently returned from a long voyage, and was preparing to sail again in November. The former, now a Cambridge fellow, was deeply engaged in classical and theological studies. Business matters connected with the restitution of their property no doubt required their presence in London with their elder brother Richard. This seems to have been the first occasion on which the whole family were together since their childhood. Two days of this time Dorothy and William spent with their uncle and aunt Cookson at Windsor.

The poetical mood which had come upon Wordsworth at Calais persisted during the three weeks of his sojourn in London. Without abating one jot of his political principles, he acknowledges, in a second group of sonnets, that France had ceased to follow true liberty: he asserts the soundness and strength of British character; he laments the luxury which rendered England's wealth a menace to herself; he warns his countrymen that nations can be great and free only by the soul.

Like the hearty countryfolk they were, the Hutchinsons gathered to meet their friends at Gallow Hill. When the Wordsworths arrived, on September 24, "Tom was forking corn, standing upon the corn-cart." Mary and Sara and Joanna were at home, and the party was joined presently by Jack and George. None of Wordsworth's brothers appear to have come for his wedding. What his emotions upon this occasion were he has given us no means of knowing. Those of his sister are easy to divine from her letter to Mrs. Marshall of September 29 and the passage in her Journal covering the marriage day. Renunciation, a sober and reasoned willingness, and a brave effort to be cheerful, are what we find in them. She was making a great sacrifice. The day of her felicity had begun to decline.

"My dear Jane," she writes,—"If this letter reaches you before next Monday, you will think of me travelling towards our own dear Grasmere with my most beloved

brother and his wife. I have long loved Mary Hutchinson as a sister, and she is greatly attached to me; this being so, you will guess that I look forward with perfect happiness to this connection between us; but, happy as I was, I half dread that concentration of all tender feelings past, present, and future, which will come upon me on the wedding morning. There never lived on earth a better woman than Mary H., and I have not a doubt that she is in every respect formed to make an excellent wife to my brother, and I seem to myself to have scarcely anything left to wish for, but that the wedding was over and we had reached our home once again. We have indeed been a long time absent; it was, however, a delightful thing to us to see all our brothers, particularly John."

In her Journal, Dorothy gives the following less restrained account of the wedding day:

"On Monday, 4th October, 1802, my brother William was married to Mary Hutchinson. I slept a good deal of the night, and rose fresh and well in the morning. At a little after eight o'clock I saw them go down the avenue towards the church. William had parted from me upstairs. When they were absent, my dear little Sara prepared the breakfast. I kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men running up the walk, coming to tell us it was over, I could stand it no longer, and threw myself on the bed, where I lay in stillness, neither hearing nor seeing anything till Sara came upstairs to me, and said, 'They are coming.' This forced me from the bed where I lay, and I moved, I knew not how, straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me, till I met my beloved William, and fell upon his bosom. He and John Hutchinson led me to the house, and there I stayed to welcome my dear Mary. As soon as we had breakfasted we departed. It rained when we set off. Poor Mary was much agitated when she parted from her brothers and sisters, and her home."

Dorothy's record of the journey back to Grasmere is unusually full, but of remarks about fields, and woods, and ruins, rather than her own feelings or the behaviour of her companions. They travelled all three together in a post-chaise, reaching Grasmere on the third evening.

Part of their course was the same she and her brother had followed nearly three years before, on their memorable walk into the Lake country. "When we passed through the village of Wensley," she says pathetically, "my heart melted away, with dear recollections—the bridge, the little waterspout, the steep hill, the church. They are among the most vivid of my own inner visions, for they were the first objects that I saw after we were left to ourselves, and had turned our whole hearts to Grasmere as a home in which we were to rest."

A remarkable proof of Wordsworth's capability of abstraction and an almost distressing evidence of placidity is the fact that after the first day's journey he composed a sonnet, on a sunset, and on the next morning another on the captivity of Mary, Queen of Scots, in Bolton Castle. By a well-merited fate, neither was successful. He thought so himself in the case of the second.

This is not the place to attempt to form an estimate of Mrs. Wordsworth's character. Suffice it to say that she was a good woman, tender, self-sacrificing, and kind; that she was not only accomplished in household arts, but sufficiently intellectual to be extremely useful to her husband on the mechanical side of authorship; that she made him happy, and that all who knew her well, throughout a long and active life, loved and honoured her. If the courtship was strikingly devoid of romantic elements, the marriage proved to be, in every domestic sense, prosperous. Mary Hutchinson was born August 16, 1770, at Penrith.

I must here refer to the doubt as to whether Mrs. Wordsworth or someone else was the subject of the lines beginning "She was a Phantom of delight." The poet told a nephew of Coleridge in 1836 that the poem "was written on 'his dear wife,'" and Bishop Wordsworth was at some pains to insist on this view in the "Memoirs." We have also the testimony of Henry Crabb Robinson, in his Diary for May 12, 1842, that the poet told him the verses were on his wife. On the other hand we have the following passage in Harriet Martineau's affectionate

article on Mrs. Wordsworth, in her "Biographical Sketches": "In the 'Memoirs of Wordsworth' it is stated that she was the original of 'She was a Phantom of delight,' and some things in the next few pages look like it; but for the greater part of the Poet's life it was certainly believed by some who ought to know that that wonderful description related to another, who flitted before his imagination in earlier days than those in which he discovered the aptitude of Mary Hutchinson to his own needs."

Miss Martineau was a neighbour of the Wordsworths in their old age; and though she complained of the narrowness of their circle, and the language above cited is possibly a little sarcastic, her tone when writing of them is generally very respectful.

On Wordsworth's wedding day, Coleridge printed in *The Morning Post* his touching poem "Dejection: an Ode." He doubtless chose that date out of compliment to his friend. The history of this poem is very interesting. It was composed on April 4, 1802, when William and Dorothy Wordsworth were visiting him at Keswick. On the 3rd the two poets had made an ascent of Skiddaw. Coleridge was at this time in one of the most terrible throes of his losing struggle against pain and despondency. His mysterious and no doubt very real ailment assumed Protean forms of torture. The habit of taking opium was fixed upon him. Natural joy, to which his fine organization made him peculiarly susceptible, was now seldom his. And he knew that this loss meant the end of poetic inspiration. He was deeply conscious of his failure as a husband and father. Self-control, and with it self-respect, had gone. But with a sweetness of soul and a beautiful absence of envy, for which we cannot too much honour him, he rejoiced that what he lacked his friend possessed. With no mere selfish dependence, but quite disinterested satisfaction, he virtually said of Wordsworth, "He must increase, but I must decrease." He leaned upon Wordsworth. It was probably Wordsworth's will-power, more than his own, that held him so long in the North at this time, trying to do his duty

to his family, trying to overcome his frailty, trying to benefit by the restorative influence of nature.

It would not have been like him to conceal the poem from his friends. They shared his sorrows; they should also share this " timely utterance," which, we may hope, gave relief to his feelings of gratitude and satisfaction to his artistic sense. In the original manuscript, the word " William " stands where " Lady " and " Otway " stand in the poem as finally published. As printed in *The Morning Post* it was in an intermediate state. The sixth and part of the seventh stanzas, as we have them now, were omitted, and " William " was changed to " Edmund." He made the change merely out of respect for Wordsworth's natural desire for privacy, and signed the poem with the Greek phonetic equivalent of his own initials, ΕΣΤΗΣΕ. By the time he published " Sibylline Leaves, " in 1817, a cloud had come between him and his friend, and the further changes were made for this reason.

Anyone who has studied the Prefaces to " Lyrical Ballads " and Coleridge's " Biographia Literaria " will perceive that this poem is a confession of unfaithfulness to the " great task of happiness." In those treatises the principle is definitely laid down that happiness is the source and purpose of poetry. After describing the wonders of night, the poet cries " I *see*, not *feel* how beautiful they are," and, carrying out this complaint, he laments:

> My genial spirits fail;
> And what can these avail,
> To lift the smoth'ring weight from off my breast ?
> It were a vain endeavour,
> Though I should gaze for ever
> On that green light that lingers in the west;
> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

Coleridge's revolt from the sensational psychology of Locke and the other masters of his earlier thinking, and a clear trace of the philosophic idealism to which he was becoming more and more attached ever since he was drawn to the study of Kant, are trans-

muted into their classical artistic expression in the fourth stanza:

O William ! we receive but what we give,
And in *our* life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud !
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world, *allow'd*
To the poor loveless, ever-anxious crowd,
Ah ! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element !
O pure of heart ! Thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be ?
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
Joy, virtuous William ! joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Joy, William ! is the spirit and the pow'r,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dow'r,
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamed of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We, we ourselves rejoice !
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

This inward power, this "shaping spirit of Imagination," he himself, he cries, has lost, but Wordsworth, the pure of heart, has kept the charm, and the poem concludes:

O William, friend of my devoutest choice,
O rais'd from anxious dread and busy care,
By the immenseness of the good and fair
Which thou see'st everywhere,
Joy lifts thy spirit, joy attunes thy voice,
To thee do all things live from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of thy living soul !
O simple spirit, guided from above,
O lofty Poet, full of life and love,
Brother and friend of my devoutest choice,
Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice.

A clearer vision of the truth no man ever had. It was a vision of the kind that comes only to one who has failed, in the hour when all illusion is torn from the soul. But the very humility that enabled Coleridge thus to prefer his friend was itself a glory. By losing himself he found himself, and this one ode would suffice to confer upon him " titles manifold," of poet, man, and Christian.

One month after this composition Wordsworth began " Resolution and Independence," not, we may well believe, without a deep consciousness that he was developing some of the thoughts suggested by Coleridge's ode. The forebodings of poverty, insanity, and death, in Wordsworth's poem, were not without foundation in a depressed state of mind. He was suffering from the strain of composition and other difficulties that had presented themselves during the past year.

The community of spirit between these two great men had now for some time been at its height. On Wordsworth's part it involved putting up with a thousand little inconsistencies and disappointments. In Coleridge it was based on a general acknowledgment of his own moral and even intellectual inferiority, an inferiority which he was quicker to feel and express than anyone else. In neither case did it involve any of those compromises, degrading or soul-saving according to the motive that prompts them, which form the working basis of most friendships. They were frank and independent men, to whom it never occurred to trifle with the truth in any matter of literary, political, or philosophic principle. This accounts for the seeming ruthlessness of Wordsworth's references to Coleridge's contributions to " Lyrical Ballads," and also for the freedom with which Coleridge judges his friend's theory of poetry. Their mutual admiration was so deep, their loyalty to each other was so strong, their general agreement on the essential principles of what most concerned both of them was so well founded, that they thought they had nothing to fear from any whole-hearted utterance. And, indeed, though temporary estrangement

was to come later, nothing ever destroyed the profound respect they felt for each other's intellectual powers, or the desire to help each other, or the love that bound them together in spirit. Wordsworth, with the command he had won upon his naturally impetuous disposition, restrained his tongue and his pen from any expression of bitterness, almost from any utterance of impatience. Coleridge behaved like a saint. But, as I have said, they were quite outspoken when criticîzing one another's works. In a letter to W. Sotheby, dated Keswick, July 13, 1802, Coleridge wrote:

" I was much pleased with your description of Wordsworth's character as it appeared to you. . . . The word ' homogeneous ' gave me great pleasure, as most accurately and happily expressing him. I must set you right with regard to my perfect coincidence with his poetic creed. It is most certain that the heads of our mutual conversations, etc., and the passages, were indeed partly taken from notes of mine; for it was at first intended that the preface [to " Lyrical Ballads "] should be written by me. And it is likewise true that I warmly accord with Wordsworth in his abhorrence of these poetic licenses, as they are called, which are indeed mere tricks of convenience and laziness." And yet, he declares, " poetry justifies as poetry, independent of any other passion, some new combinations of language, and *commands* the omission of many others allowable in other compositions. Now Wordsworth, *me saltem judice,* has in his system not sufficiently admitted the former, and in his practice has too frequently sinned against the latter. Indeed, we have had lately some little controversy on the subject, and we begin to suspect that there is somewhere or other a radical difference in our opinions. *Dulce est inter amicos rarissima dissensione condere plurimas consentiones,* saith St. Augustine, who said more good things than any saint or sinner that I ever read in Latin."

A further adumbration or promise of " Biographia Literaria " occurs in a letter to Southey, July 29, 1802, in which Coleridge describes a projected volume, " Concerning Poetry and the characteristic merits of the Poets, our contemporaries ":

" Although Wordsworth's Preface is half a child of my own brain, and arose out of conversations so frequent that, with few exceptions, we could scarcely either of us, perhaps, positively say which first started a particular thought (I am speaking of the Preface as it stood in the second volume), yet I am far from going all lengths with Wordsworth. He has written lately a number of Poems (thirty-two in all), some of them of considerable length (the longest one hundred and sixty lines), the greater number of these, to my feelings, very excellent compositions, but here and there a daring humbleness of language and versification, and a strict adherence to matter of fact, even to prolixity, that startled me. His alterations, likewise, in ' Ruth ' perplexed me, and I have thought and thought again, and have not had my doubts solved by Wordsworth. On the contrary, I rather suspect that somewhere or other there is a radical difference in our theoretical opinions respecting poetry; this I shall endeavour to go to the bottom of, and, acting the arbitrator between the old school and the new school, hope to lay down some plain and conspicuous, though not superficial, canons of criticism respecting poetry. What an admirable definition Milton gives, quite in an ' obiter ' way, when he says of poetry, that it is ' *simple, sensuous, passionate!*' It truly comprises the whole that can be said on the subject. In the new edition of the L. Ballads there is a valuable appendix, which I am sure you must like, and in the Preface itself considerable additions; one on the dignity and nature of the office and character of a Poet, that is very grand, and of a sort of Verulamian power and majesty, but it is, in parts (and this is the fault, *me judice*, of all the latter half of that Preface), obscure beyond any necessity, and the extreme elaboration and almost constrainedness of the diction contrasted (to my feelings) somewhat harshly with the general style of these Poems, to which the Preface is an introduction."

We cannot be too grateful for that phrase, " Verulamian power and majesty." The passage just quoted contains the germ of Coleridge's " Biographia Literaria," which, together with Wordsworth's Preface, constitutes the most original, philosophic, and reconstructive work in modern literary criticism, until the publication of Tolstoi's " What is Art ?" which puts the whole subject

on a broader basis. The fifth, sixth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters, which are the marrow of Tolstoi's startling book, contain a new evangel of criticism. As between Wordsworth and Coleridge, it is important to note that the former, though a stiffer and more practical nature, was the innovator, the iconoclast, the radical, both in theory and in practice; while the latter, a dreamer, a person reckoned irresponsible, was full of hampering misgivings and retrospective qualifications. He stood aghast at Wordsworth's audacity, and thought him ruthless. Wordsworth's consistency, the homogeneity which Coleridge praised, was the very essence and warrant of his greatness. We can well dispense with the praise of those who commend his less characteristic beauties at the expense of his true grandeur, who profess to allow him the title of a major poet because he has sometimes equalled Milton in Miltonic qualities or anticipated the refinements of Tennyson. Take from Wordsworth's poetry all its lines of Virgilian elegance, of Tennysonian grace, of Miltonic majesty, and you will still have, in what is left, the true Wordsworth, the central, unmistakably personal qualities of which the rest is but a far circumference, dull and wan in some quarters, splendid enough in others, but not always bound to the midmost point by a true radiation.

To act as arbitrator between old and new schools, not in literary criticism only, but in every other department of philosophy, came to be more and more Coleridge's office. His enormous reading and his quickly inflamed historical sympathy made him see things from more than one side, which was well, but kept him from seeing any one side steadily, which was unfortunate. He thus became in his later years, and was already becoming when he wrote that letter, the first of nineteenth-century reactionaries, and one of the very few really great men who had recourse to mysticism as a check to rational thought. Wordsworth's mysticism, if indeed it can be so called, was of the imagination rather than the reason; it spent itself in " Tintern Abbey," the " Intimations " Ode, and other works of his poetic prime, and did not

pass over into the religious philosophy of his later age. If he was then orthodox, his orthodoxy was Christian rationalism, not Christian mysticism, and, perhaps, neither rational nor mystical Christianity. It must be admitted that as a moderator in criticism Coleridge made some sensible practical amendments to Wordsworth's theory. And what he wrote for the world in " Biographia Literaria " can be only a hundredth part of the wise counsel he gave Wordsworth in private. Moderators of opinion are often useful, but the glory or the shame belongs to partisans. In this case, in spite of Coleridge's assertion and the truth of his assertion, that the Preface was half a child of his own brain, its warrior sire was Wordsworth.

So close was the mutual dependence of the two poets in 1802 and 1803 that we must revert for a moment to the former year, and note that, whether for good or ill, Coleridge was absent from the Wordsworths for many weeks. After their departure in July, he plucked up enough resolution to make a very jolly nine days' tour alone, visiting Buttermere and Wastdale, and climbing Scafell. From early in November till Christmas Eve he was away, most of the time in Wales with Thomas Wedgwood. On that day he turned up at Grasmere, and heard of the birth of his daughter, born the previous morning. Wedgwood had come north with him, and was staying at Glenridding, on Ullswater. Kirkstone Pass now took the place of Dunmail Raise as the barrier to be surmounted every few days. But before long Coleridge had gone to London, where he spent some time, until well into April, with the Lambs. He was in their house when Mary Lamb had one of her relapses into madness. On his departure he entrusted to Charles Lamb the task of seeing his forthcoming edition of poems through the press. His sufferings from neuralgia, or whatever his mysterious and painful disease may have been, kept his mind fixed on a foreign residence, in a southern climate, in Portugal, Malta, the West Indies, Madeira, even Hungary; but poverty and irresolution held him fast. It was probably his restlessness, more

than Wordsworth's fondness for travel, that first made them think of the next step they took together, their tour in Scotland. The first intimation we have of this occurs in a letter from Coleridge to Southey in July, 1803; apropos of a projected "Bibliotheca Britannica," he asks: "If I go into Scotland, shall I engage Walter Scott to write the history of the Scottish poets?" There is only one of Wordsworth's poems of which it is fairly safe to say that it was written in the spring of 1803, and that is "The Green Linnet," which certainly shows no trace of restlessness, but, on the contrary, a "settled low content."

Yet we must admit that he was capable of yielding at about the same time to a very different mood, if his own ascription of the lines beginning "It is no spirit who from heaven hath flown" is correct. They express an ambition of the most sky-reaching kind. Wordsworth seldom gives way to a certain impulse to which not a few of the so-called Romantic poets of a slightly later time yielded, often with entire lack of reserve. Byron, Shelley, Hugo, did not hesitate to announce their belief in themselves as superior beings. Wordsworth was a match for any of them in pride, but so carefully does he in general restrain himself that we feel a shock on reading these verses. The sons of Zebedee might not so much have displeased the other disciples if their request had not been out of keeping with the general humility of their demeanour. The piece is a bold aspiration after eminence and unreproved freedom. The poet beholds the evening star shining alone while yet it is broad daylight, and is startled with the thought that perchance he may thus some day stand detached from his fellow-mortals. That the verses were inspired by earthly ambition, and not, as some have supposed, by a longing for heaven, is especially plain in one of the variant readings of lines 9-12—viz.:

> O most ambitious Star! thy presence brought
> A startling recollection to my mind
> Of the distinguished few among mankind,
> Who dare to step beyond their natural race.

About this time he also wrote a much greater poem, the verses to little Hartley Coleridge, six years old, which begin "O thou! whose fancies from afar are brought." The small group of poems in which Wordsworth directly addresses living persons among his friends are almost all of superior quality, serious, exquisitely elaborated, and show an intimate and loving knowledge of the persons to whom they are dedicated. A kind of epigrammatic perfection is attained in the prophetic lines:

> I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest,
> Lord of thy house and hospitality;
> And Grief, uneasy lover! never rest
> But when she sate within the touch of thee.

This figure of Grief, as an obtrusive lover, not to be got rid of, not able to take herself away from her victim, haunts the mind as a thing seen and shuddered at.

Metrical and other similarities, together with coincidences of time and place, indicate that the poem was originally a part of the "Intimations" Ode, into which it fits perfectly between the seventh and the eighth stanzas. It is true, as Professor Garrod has pointed out, that the line "O thou! whose fancies from afar are brought" is found, under a slightly earlier date, in Coleridge's notebook; but this does not prove that it was not first uttered by Wordsworth.

Thomas De Quincey, at that time an unwilling schoolboy of seventeen, was even more completely carried off his feet by "Lyrical Ballads" than John Wilson had been. On May 31, 1803, he wrote to the author through Longman and Rees, the publishers. The letter did not reach Wordsworth till July 27. Some boyish charm, heightened by contrast with precocity of judgment, it must have had, for Wordsworth answered it at once, and in terms of great kindness, even inviting his unknown correspondent to visit him. But, evidently in reply to a too enthusiastic overture, he gives him a warning which De Quincey long afterwards had occasion to remember: "My friendship it is not in my power to give. This is a gift which no man can make; it is not

in our power. A sound and healthy friendship is the growth of time and circumstance. It will spring up and thrive like a wild-flower when these favour, and when they do not, it is in vain to look for it." In this letter he announces: "I am going with my friend Coleridge and my sister upon a tour into Scotland for six weeks or two months. . . . Most likely we shall set off in a few days."

CHAPTER XVII

TOUR IN SCOTLAND

And set off they did on August 14, although Mrs. Wordsworth had on June 18 given birth to a son, who was named John

The Scottish tour has been as adequately described as any journey ever made. It furnished Wordsworth with subjects for more than a dozen poems, Coleridge with grievances and pleasures for some wonderful letters, and Dorothy with material for an unsurpassed book of prose description. Her " Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland " were written after their return, from copious notes taken day by day. The Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals were memorials for her brother and herself only; these fuller and more finished pages were intended to serve the further purpose of entertaining the wider family circle. Fragments of them were printed in the " Memoirs," and the book as a whole was published for the first time by Principal Shairp, in 1874, and again by Professor Knight, in 1904. In style it is a perfect model of simple, natural, and effective English. There is here absolutely no literary affectation. A very great effort is made to describe things accurately, but the writing evidently differs in no respect from the language Dorothy Wordsworth would have employed in telling the tale orally, except that it is, of course, more deliberate and careful. The freedom permitted by this form of composition enabled her to show her interest in a wide range of subjects—gardening, agriculture, architecture, economic conditions, national and local traits, incidents of human life, customs, dress, peculiarities of speech, and the emotions excited by all these things in herself and her companions. She shows a lively and good-natured humour combined with ready sympathy,

but, above all, she was interested, and it is evident that her brother was equally interested, in landscape. Her descriptions of the face of the country, whether in close detail or in larger aspects, are, I think, unrivalled. She knew, as Ruskin and many other famous describers have not so well known, how to exclude her feelings and report what her eyes actually saw. Though upon occasion she could, after the manner of her brother and of other poets since the world began, infuse her soul into her senses, and reproduce the impression of " both what they half create and half perceive," she kept the processes distinct, and seems to have worked upon the principle that material truth and imaginative truth should not be blended without due warning.

Though the tour was, in the old-fashioned sense of the term, a sentimental journey, there is not a trace of sentimentality in her account. Even in the presence of ruined monastic buildings, which are wont to awaken lachrymose and futile regrets, she maintains her composure. We are still a long way, in her case at least, from the cult of mediævalism. She is a creature of the eighteenth century, and does not see the past through a mist of tears and romantic doctrine. In general, she reserves her softness for human distress and accepts results of history with a somewhat hard-headed complacency. It requires a magnifying-glass to distinguish either in her or in her brother, up to this time, certain of the characteristic marks of Romanticism—its reactionary view of history, its sentimentality, and its tendency to claim in behalf of the illuminated a morality less rigorous than that which binds the rest of mankind.

Some idea of the conversation while Coleridge was yet of the party may be gained from their remarks upon a great mine-pump, whose arm they observed heaving upward every half-minute. " There would have been something in this object very striking in any place, as it was impossible not to invest the machine with some faculty of intellect; it seemed to have made the first step from brute matter to life and purpose, showing its progress by great power. William made a remark to

this effect, and Coleridge observed that it was like a giant with one idea." Her own observant and contented mind is shown in her remark: "I can always walk over a moor with a light foot; I seem to be drawn more closely to nature in such places than anywhere else; or rather I feel more strongly the power of nature over me, and am better satisfied with myself for being able to find enjoyment in what unfortunately to many persons is either dismal or insipid."

It is amusing to think how little effect the metaphysics of Coleridge had upon her. It is not fanciful to suppose that he must have chafed at the absorbed interest the Wordsworths took in nature solely for its own sake. This interest was not that of mere amateurs; it had a systematic, a professional quality.

As throwing light on Wordsworth's character, his tastes, his personal traits, the "Recollections" are invaluable. The Grasmere Journal shows him amid familiar surroundings, at his ease. In Scotland he was engaged in strange activities, facing all sorts of practical difficulties, and stimulated by fresh impulses every day. What strikes one most, in this account, is his faculty—and his sister's too, for they were as one person in this—for getting at the heart of things. The annoyances and distractions of travel affected them little. Every sunrise was to them the beginning of an adventure, a new life, like the dawn of a child's holiday. It is hardly too much to say that nothing commonplace happened to them during those six weeks. If the sky was blue, that was a miracle; if rain fell and ways were foul, that was wonderful too. They were not real children of the road, however, not free denizens of the world; they carried in their memory a standard for all they saw. They were constantly comparing Scottish lochs with English lakes, Scottish straths with English vales. Just as they measured one or two great rocks with "William's walking-stick," to see if they were as tall as the "bowder-stone" in Borrowdale, so they studied Highlands and Lowlands from a Cumbrian point of view. One is struck with their great physical endurance and their

cheerful acceptance of hardships. They were constantly faced with the possibility of not finding a lodging for the night. William had to sleep more than once in haylofts, and Dorothy on the carriage cushions in a hovel. As for food, they had to put up with what the poor Highlanders happened to have in their huts—porridge, oatcake, and whey, and deemed themselves lucky if search produced a few eggs. A boiled fowl was a boon. More than once they had to wait for their supper among drunken drovers. They showed an admirable power of adapting themselves to circumstances and people, neither holding themselves aloof nor expecting too much. Even in the Lowlands the state of the roads and inns would justify one in calling the country wild. They saw only one stage-coach in all Scotland. The people, both Lowland and Highland, though almost uniformly kind and honest, were often in a condition of material backwardness, the like of which can scarcely be found now anywhere in Europe or America. Coleridge, though he was no mean long-distance walker, suffered from fatigue and privation. The hardier Wordsworths were undaunted. Through mud and rain, across desolate moors and dangerous ferries, they struggled on, and it must have been a wild-looking pair that wandered through Edinburgh High Street towards the middle of September. It is little wonder they remained in the Old Town, avoiding the fashionable crowds of Princes Street.

In specific biographical details the "Recollections" are, of course, very rich, but the little book is so charming that it would be a pity to attempt to cull them out. Every lover of Wordsworth should read the original. I may be permitted, however, to make a few general observations, and to call attention to one or two points which might escape notice.

They set out, Coleridge and William and Dorothy Wordsworth, with one horse and an Irish jaunting-car. It was expected that there would be at least as much walking as driving, and so there was. It was expected also that the three should keep together, but on

August 29, by the shore of Loch Long, "poor Coleridge," to quote Miss Wordsworth, "being very unwell, determined to send his clothes to Edinburgh and make the best of his way thither, being afraid to face much wet weather in an open carriage." Various other reasons, more or less whimsical, but connected generally with the state of his health, have been given by Coleridge himself, who seems to imply that his companions were to blame. He wrote to Poole, October 3, 1803: "Wordsworth himself a brooder over his hypochondriacal sensations, was not my fittest travelling companion." But there need be no mystery about it. The wonder is that he could so long have stuck to a plan and endured so much hardship. The surprise comes when we discover that, instead of turning back, he made a short-cut to the North, outstripping his former comrades, and preceding them over a part of their route. If his report is correct, he walked a prodigious distance, going as far as Inverness.

In "Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers" (p. 205) occurs the following passage:

"Early in the present century, I set out on a tour in Scotland, accompanied by my sister; but an accident which happened to her prevented us from going as far as we had intended. During our excursion we fell in with Wordsworth, Miss Wordsworth, and Coleridge, who were, at the same time, making a tour in a vehicle that looked very like a cart. Wordsworth and Coleridge were entirely occupied in talking about poetry; and the whole care of looking out for cottages where they might get refreshment and pass the night, as well as of seeing their poor horse fed and littered, devolved upon Miss Wordsworth. She was a most delightful person, so full of talent, so simple-minded, and so modest! If I am not mistaken, Coleridge proved so impracticable a travelling-companion that Wordsworth and his sister were at last obliged to separate from him."

It is too bad that the poets should be deprived of such credit as they deserve for their care of "the poor horse." The animal was almost entirely in Wordsworth's charge, who appears to have been the only one of the three

travellers capable of driving. He drove it badly, to be sure, letting it back down hillsides and tangle itself in the harness; but still, he drove. Coleridge never assumed this responsibility, and was wise enough to lead instead of holding the reins. There is more than one touching vision granted us in the "Recollections," of Wordsworth standing guard over "the poor horse" while it ate its corn in tavern-stables, and once he is reported to have tried, though in vain, to unyoke it.

At Dumfries the three travellers visited the grave of Burns and his house, and were stirred to melancholy by the thought which must come to everyone who sees the squalid surroundings amid which so much manhood and genius were smothered. They called to mind his intemperance, and felt oppressed with fear lest his sons, suffering rather than benefiting from his fame, might yield to the same temptations which had beset him. It is a pleasure to observe that the tone of their reflections about Burns was one of sincere and almost humble admiration, qualified only by sorrow for his real faults, and not by any lack of appreciation of his poetic genius or his many virtues. They were, no doubt, like most people at that time, under the influence of Dr. Currie's dismal "Life," and it is not strange that Dorothy should have written, on catching a glimpse of Ellisland, the scene of one of Burns's vain endeavours: "There is no thought surviving in connection with Burns's daily life that is not heart-depressing." Wordsworth felt a poignant regret that he had not known Burns. Dorothy's pages should be read in conjunction with the poem "To the Sons of Burns," if one would appreciate the genuine solicitude of a good man which it expresses. The other poem, "At the Grave of Burns," is the most precious tribute ever paid to Burns, and one of the greatest elegies in our language. It is plainly, too, a cry of personal grief:

> Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
> By Skiddaw seen,—
> Neighbours we were, and loving friends
> We might have been.

Overcome by this thought and by the melancholy surroundings, which forced upon their attention the unhappy side of Burns's life, the three pilgrims withdrew in sadness from the scene, but to Wordsworth's heart of hearts voices of consolation spoke:

> Sighing I turned away; but ere
> Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,
> Music that sorrow comes not near,
> A ritual hymn
> Chanted in love that casts out fear
> By Seraphim.

Whether it was that they dreaded the expense, or felt ill at ease in their rustic attire amid townsmen, or cared too much for natural beauty, the travellers stayed only one night in Glasgow and one in Edinburgh. It is singular enough that the Wordsworths should have been willing to leave home at all, considering that little John was but two months old; it is odder still that mention is made only once of their inquiring for letters. They were, apparently, cut off for many days together in the Highlands, and not pursuing always a prearranged course. They gave neither themselves nor their horse a Sunday rest, which must have scandalized the Scots. And, indeed, it does not seem to have been their custom to attend church when at home, or to make any distinction among the days of the week, whether at Racedown or at Alfoxden or at Town-end. The tradition of Wordsworth's church-going habits dates from a much later period. In this connection, it may be observed that Dorothy's Journal up to this time, and the letters of herself and her brother, are noticeably free from the religious musings—I am tempted to say the cant—which were usual in diaries and letters generally throughout the early half of the nineteenth century.

Perhaps Rogers—he knew everybody and was kind to everybody—gave them a letter of introduction to Scott. Lockhart, who got his information partly from a conversation with Wordsworth and hearing him read extracts from Dorothy's Journal, in 1836, says:

" Their common acquaintance, Stoddart, had so often talked to them of each other, that they met as if they had not been strangers; and they parted friends. Mr. and Miss Wordsworth had just completed that tour in the Highlands, of which so many incidents have since been immortalized, both in the poet's verse and in the hardly less poetical prose of his sister's Diary."*

After tearing themselves unwillingly away from Edinburgh and seeing Hawthornden, the house of the poet Drummond, whither Ben Jonson came on foot from London to visit him, the travellers put themselves for six days in " the Shirra's " capable hands. The meeting of Scott and Wordsworth is memorable in literary annals. The wayfarers had risen early, on a fine morning, September 17, and had walked from Roslin through the glen and considerably farther to Lasswade. " Arrived at Lasswade," says the Journal, " before Mr. and Mrs. Scott had risen, and waited some time in a large sitting-room. Breakfasted with them, and stayed till two o'clock, and Mr. Scott accompanied us back almost to Roslin, having given us directions respecting our future journey, and promised to meet us at Melrose two days after." Wordsworth retained a lively recollection of that day. He told Lockhart of it:

" We were received with that frank cordiality which, under whatever circumstances I afterwards met him, always marked his manners; and, indeed, I found him then in every respect—except, perhaps, that his animal spirits were somewhat higher—precisely the same man that you knew him in later life; the same lively, entertaining conversation, full of anecdote and averse from disquisition; the same unaffected modesty about himself; the same cheerful and benevolent and hopeful views of man and the world. He partly read and partly recited, sometimes in an enthusiastic style of chant, the first four cantos of the ' Lay of the Last Minstrel '; and the novelties of the manners, the clear picturesque descriptions, and the easy glowing energy of so much of the verse, greatly delighted me."

Even without Scott's presence they were to find themselves henceforth under his protection as long as they

* " Life of Sir Walter Scott," II. 160.

remained in Scotland. At Clovenford, for example, Dorothy writes: "On our mentioning Mr. Scott's name, the woman of the house showed us all possible civility. . . . But, indeed, Mr. Scott is respected everywhere; I believe that by favour of his name one might be hospitably entertained throughout all the borders of Scotland." It was at Clovenford that Wordsworth wrote "Yarrow Unvisited." Scott was their guide through Melrose Abbey, having rejoined them on the 19th.

"He was now travelling to the assizes at Jedburgh in his character of Sheriff of Selkirk, and on that account, as well as for his own sake, he was treated with great respect, a small part of which was vouchsafed to us as his friends, though I could not persuade the woman [at the inn at Melrose] to show me the beds, or to make any sort of promise till she was assured from the Sheriff himself that he had no objection to sleep in the same room with William."

At Jedburgh they witnessed some of the official ceremonies in which their new friend was engaged, and when he was free from court duties he accompanied them through part of his beloved border-country, a little way beyond Hawick. Thence they proceeded through Teviotdale to Langholm, Longtown, and Carlisle, and so home, where on September 25, "a beautiful autumnal day," they found "Mary in perfect health, Joanna Hutchinson with her, and little John asleep in the clothes-basket by the fire." Their thoughts had flown ahead of them, and between Dalston and Grasmere Wordsworth had composed the sonnet beginning:

> Fly, some kind Harbinger, to Grasmere-dale!
> Say that we come, and come by this day's light.

Coleridge's story of the separation in the Highlands does not represent it in a very different light from the account given by Miss Wordsworth. In a doleful letter to his wife, written at the Ferry of Ballater about September 1, he complains that he had had an attack of rheumatism in his head at the very place, near Loch

Lomond, where the Wordsworths enjoyed themselves more than in any other part of their tour, the place where they met the "sweet Highland Girl." "And now William," he continues, "proposed to me to leave them and make my way on foot to Loch Katrine, the Trossachs, whence it is only twenty miles to Stirling, where the coach runs through to Edinburgh. He and Dorothy resolved to fight it out. I eagerly caught at the proposal; for the *sitting* in an open carriage in the rain is death to me, and somehow or other I had not been quite comfortable."

In dividing the common fund, the Wordsworths, being two and purposing to make much the longer journey, naturally took the larger share, and Coleridge was left with six guineas, which would have been quite enough to take him back to Keswick had he pursued his original intention. But no sooner was he alone than the sense of liberty revived his spirits, and he set out to see Glencoe and the north of Scotland! "I am now going," he writes, "to cross the ferry for Fort William, for I have resolved to eke out my cash by all sorts of self-denial, and to walk along the *whole line of the Forts*. I am unfortunately shoeless; there is no town where I can get a pair, and I have no money to spare to buy them, so I expect to enter Perth barefooted. I burnt my shoes in drying them at the boatman's hovel on Loch Katrine, and I have by this means hurt my heel. Likewise my left leg is a little inflamed, and the rheumatism in the right of my head afflicts me sorely when I begin to grow warm in my bed, chiefly my right eye, ear, cheek, and the three teeth; but, nevertheless, I am enjoying myself, having Nature with solitude and liberty—the liberty natural and solitary, the solitude natural and free." "I take no opiates," he adds.

On September 10 he wrote to Southey from Edinburgh: "I have walked 263 miles in eight days, so I must have strength somewhere, but my spirits are dreadful, owing entirely to the horrors of every night—I truly dread to sleep. It is no shadow with me, but substantial misery foot-thick, that makes me sit by my bedside of a morning

and cry." And in this letter he sends Southey the first copy of that heartbreaking poem "The Pains of Sleep," including three pathetic lines which for some reason he left out when he published it in 1816:

> Frail is my soul, yea, strengthless wholly,
> Unequal, restless, melancholy;
> But free from Hate and sensual Folly.

In a second letter to Southey, three days later, he speaks of his dreadful fate: "I am tolerably well, meaning the day. My last night was not such a noisy night of horrors as three nights out of four are with me. O God! when a man blesses the loud screams of agony that awake him night after night, night after night, and when a man's repeated night screams have made him a nuisance in his own house, it is better to die than to live."

Fifteen poems were the fruit of Wordsworth's Scotch tour: "At the Grave of Burns," which was inspired, as we have seen, at Dumfries, and composed in large part before 1807; "Thoughts suggested the Day following on the Banks of the Nith, now the Poet's Residence," which was not finished till 1839; "To the Sons of Burns after visiting the Grave of their Father," composed partly in 1803, and greatly altered in various editions; "To a Highland Girl," composed in 1803, and corresponding with peculiar exactness to the details of an experience related in Dorothy's Journal; "Glenalmain, or The Narrow Glen," composed probably in 1803; "Stepping Westward," composed between 1803 and 1805; "The Solitary Reaper," composed in the same period, and suggested not only by experiences of the poet himself, but more especially, as he acknowledged in a note, by a beautiful sentence in a manuscript of his friend Thomas Wilkinson, the Quaker farmer, entitled "Tours to the British Mountains";* "Address to

* Wilkinson's book was not published till 1824. The sentence, which refers to an incident observed near Loch Lomond, is as follows: "Passed a female who was reaping alone: she sung in Erse, as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more."

Kilchurn Castle," begun in 1803 and finished long afterwards; " Rob Roy's Grave," composed between September, 1803, and April, 1807; a " Sonnet composed at —— Castle," composed September 18, 1803, and enclosed in the letter to Scott already mentioned; " Yarrow Unvisited," composed in 1803; " The Matron of Jedborough and her Husband," composed between 1803 and 1805, though, as Dorothy says, long after seeing the persons described; " Fly, Some Kind Harbinger to Grasmere-Dale," composed September 25, 1803; and " The Blind Highland Boy, a Tale told by the Fireside, after returning to the Vale of Grasmere," a poem suggested long after the tour, but coloured by it in several details, as, for example, in stanzas 12, 13, and 14, which reproduce observations recorded by Dorothy.

The general poetic level of this series is high. Three at least of the number, " At the Grave of Burns," " The Solitary Reaper," and " Yarrow Unvisited," are among Wordsworth's best achievements. Even if they stood alone, they would indicate a remarkably wide range of power. The value of the tour, considered as a stage in Wordsworth's artistic development, is chiefly in the fact that it invited him to a fresh field of observation, unconnected with his past life. Yet, of course, the principles which he had learned to apply to nature and to human life were applicable to this field as well as to the familiar scenes around Grasmere. He could still carry out his central plan of self-development, which was to retain undiminished and uncorrupted the lively feelings of childhood and the pure ideals of youth, while attaching them, by means of manhood's riper knowledge and more deliberate will, to objects of permanent and universal experience. Here and there, in these new poems, we feel something of the freedom and irresponsible gaiety of a happy wayfarer, oftener still the lively and romantic spirit of Scotland. Sentiment, when it is not restrained altogether, is expressed with greater *abandon* by Scots than by the English. Adopting Burns's favourite form of stanza, Wordsworth follows his

example also in opening wide the flood-gate of feeling. Similarly, for " Yarrow Unvisited," he took a reeling kind of Scottish melody, which is heard in several old ballads, and made it carry a certain gay wilfulness foreign to his own, and, indeed, to English character in general.

CHAPTER XVIII

NEW INFLUENCES

Before they set out on the Scottish tour there began to flow into the lives of Coleridge and Wordsworth a new current, which was to modify their attitude towards society and ultimately to alter the tone and even the texture of Wordsworth's poetry. This was the patronage of Sir George Beaumont, a wealthy and generous baronet, who with Lady Beaumont lodged at Coleridge's house in the summer of 1803. He was a man of refinement and taste, interested in all the arts, himself an accomplished though conventional landscape painter, and justly proud of being related to the Elizabethan dramatist Francis Beaumont. At the very beginning of their acquaintance, Sir George bought and presented to Wordsworth a piece of land called Applethwaite, near Keswick, in the hope that the poet would build on it and thus be able to live nearer to Coleridge. It was not until eight weeks later, and then in an awkward and almost ungracious letter, that Wordsworth accepted this gift. But before long the style of his epistles to Sir George became deferential, as his respect for him deepened and his dependence upon him increased. The baronet was older than he by about seventeen years, which may account in part for Wordsworth's departure from his customary manner with other friends, all of whom were about his own age or younger. Sir George was not only hospitable and free-handed to him, but was one of the first persons of high position and large social influence to appreciate his works. Whatever the process and however unconscious it may have been, this relationship with a family of superior wealth and rank soon began to weaken the poet's defiant feeling of independence and, shall we say, to enlarge his social

tolerance. It is painful to be obliged to admit that Coleridge's surrender to the new influence was precipitate and almost abject. Wordsworth kept his feet, though sliding. On the whole it would have been better for them both if they had kept clear of this well-meant but entangling alliance.

Among the first poems that Wordsworth sent to Sir George was the coldly ferocious sonnet "Shout, for a mighty victory is won," written in "anticipation" of the slaughter that awaited the French if they should set foot on British soil. The danger was not wholly imaginary, and the hard logic of events had made him perceive that France by embracing Bonaparte had forfeited her titles to respect and given up her glorious cause. Yet one could wish that the poet had not expressed such sanguinary feelings. It is more to his credit that he actually joined the local volunteers and drilled with them.

Though he was at this time giving up the struggle of eleven or twelve years and accepting the political principles of the dominant classes, he still maintained his isolation in religious opinion.

There is a curious passage in Coleridge's notebook ("Anima Poetæ," p. 29), under date of October 26, 1803, from which it may be inferred that he still considered Wordsworth "a semi-atheist." Evidently the latter refused to assent to the old-fashioned teleological argument for the existence of God, and spoke of nature in such terms as to provoke a suspicion that he was a Pantheist. Coleridge was at this time so weary of speculative wandering, and so eager to make a short-cut to certitude and peace by attributing to God the qualities of a man raised to perfection, which is the well-known process of theology, that it distressed him to find Wordsworth willing to pursue still his old independent course. He writes:

"A most unpleasant dispute with Wordsworth and Hazlitt. I spoke, I fear, too contemptuously: but they spoke so irreverently, so malignantly, of the Divine Wisdom that it overset me. [Here follows a tirade against

Hazlitt.] But *thou*, dearest Wordsworth—and what if Ray, Durham, Paley, have carried the observation of the aptitude of things too far, too habitually into pedantry? Oh, how many worse pedantries! how few so harmless, with so much efficient good! Dear William, pardon pedantry in others, and avoid it in yourself, instead of scoffing and reviling at pedantry in good men and a good cause—even by that very act becoming one. But, surely, always to look at the superficies of objects for the purpose of taking delight in their beauty, and sympathy with their real or imagined life, is as deleterious to the health and manhood of intellect as always to be peering and unravelling contrivance may be to the simplicity of the affection and the grandeur and unity of the imagination. Oh, dearest William! would Ray or Durham have spoken of God as you spoke of nature?"*

Towards the end of 1804 Coleridge's health gave his friends increased anxiety. Dorothy in her letters to Mrs. Clarkson makes an appalling list of his disorders. He thought only a warm climate could restore him to health, and arrangements were made for him to join Stoddart, a friend of Charles Lamb, who had gone out to Malta as King's Advocate. The ever-helpful Poole was in London, and Coleridge, unhappy at home, and eager to go south, started on December 20 to be with him. He had got as far as Dove Cottage when a severe illness brought him low, and he had to remain there, nursed by the Wordsworths, for about three weeks. Once away from his uncongenial wife, he was less in a hurry to reach Malta, and what with an engagement at the *Courier* office, two visits to the Beaumonts at their place in Essex, and much time with several old friends—Tobin, Davy, Godwin, Lamb, and others—he did not sail before April 9. Wordsworth, out of his very slender means, and at a time when his own needs must have been pressing, lent him £100; and lending in this case probably meant giving. Before sailing he had another dreadful attack. The Wordsworths were greatly

* Ernest Hartley Coleridge, writing to me in 1916, said with his customary frankness: "I made a bad blunder in 'Anima Poetæ': it was Derham, not Durham, whom he coupled with Paley. William Derham, 1657-1753, was the author of 'Physico-Reality' and 'Astro-Theology.'"

alarmed. The letters they wrote him in March and April show how they loved him. These are different from their letters to other persons, being full of the tenderest sentiments and most caressing terms.

In a letter to Thomas Wedgwood, written in January, 1804, Coleridge gives an excruciating description of his sufferings in the previous month, and pays a tribute to the Wordsworths which should always be remembered to their credit:

"Wordsworth had, as I may truly say, forced on me a hundred pounds, in the event of my going to Madeira. . . . I stayed at Grasmere (Mr. Wordsworth's) a month, three-fourths of the time bed-ridden; and deeply do I feel the enthusiastic kindness of Wordsworth's wife and sister, who sat up by me, one or the other, in order to awaken me at the first symptoms of distressful feeling; and even when they went to rest, continued often and often to weep and watch for me even in their dreams. I left them January the 14th."

The Wordsworths kept up communication with Coleridge as long as possible in the spring of 1804. In a letter of March 24 to Mrs. Clarkson, Dorothy says:

"Judge, then, how fully we have been employed, what with nursing and the ordinary business of the house, which is really not a little, Molly being far worse qualified for her place as it is at present than formerly, having a deal of irregular work, and also her strength having considerably failed her. Poor lamb! we shall keep on with her as long as we can, for I believe she will be heart-broken when she leaves us. The last letter we had from Coleridge brought us but dismal tidings. [Here follows an account of his illness.] He wrote last Tuesday, and was to go to Portsmouth on Saturday. He was at Sir George Beaumont's in Grosvenor Square, a blessed chance! for Lady Beaumont is as tender in her attentions to him as if she were his sister, and both Sir G. and she are human-hearted creatures, even as if they had been bred up and passed their lives among the best people of our own rank. C. has taken his passage in a ship bound to Venice and Trieste. He is to stop at Gibraltar and touch at Malta, where he will see our friend Stoddart, who has a place there under Govern-

ment, and, with his wife, resides there. C. has not told us what his plans are, but most likely if his health be steady he will travel in Italy and perhaps visit Mount Etna. We expect Mrs. C. and the children at Grasmere after Mrs. Southey's confinement."

Early in 1804 Wordsworth wrote to Wrangham: "I have great things in meditation, but as yet I have been doing little ones. At present I am engaged in a poem on my own earlier life, which will take five parts, or books, to complete; three of which are nearly finished. My other meditated words are a philosophical poem and a narrative one. These two will employ me some, I ought to say several, years; and I do not mean to appear before the world again as an author, till one of them at least be finished." In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, February 13, Dorothy describes the manner of composing "The Prelude": "He takes out the umbrella, and I dare say stands stock-still under it, during many a rainy half-hour, in the middle of road or field!" In a letter of March 6, 1804, to his young admirer De Quincey, then at Oxford, the poet, after recommending the love of nature and books as a means of happiness and virtue, goes on to say that the poem on his own early life will be only tributary to a larger and more important work: "Of this larger work I have written one book and several scattered fragments; it is a moral and philosophical poem; the subject whatever I find most interesting in Nature, Man, and Society, and most adapted to poetic illustration. To this work I mean to devote the prime of my life and the chief force of my mind." On March 24 Dorothy writes to Mrs. Clarkson that she and Mary are making a complete copy of her brother's poems "for poor Coleridge, to be his companion in Italy." "A great addition," she says, "to the poem on my brother's life has been made since C. left us, fifteen hundred lines." On September 8, evidently of the same year, Wordsworth tells Sir George Beaumont: "You will be glad to hear that I have been busily employed lately. I wrote one book of 'The Recluse,' nearly a thousand lines, then had a rest. Last week I

began again, and have written three hundred more. I hope all tolerably well, and certainly with good views." The introduction of "good views" in late stages of composition reduces considerably the biographical value of "The Prelude." It is unfortunate the work was not finished earlier and left untouched. He "tinkered" with it all the rest of his life, tempering its boldness and removing features which he deemed inconsistent with the staid principles of his mature age. On Christmas Day, 1804, he tells Sir George that he has written upward of two thousand verses in the last ten weeks.

The short poems written in 1804 are few, and more than one of them were of earlier inspiration. We have considered the origin of "I wandered lonely as a cloud" and that of "Vaudracour and Julia." Wordsworth later ascribed "She was a Phantom of Delight" and "The Affliction of Margaret ——" to this year. Four lines of the former, he tells us in the Fenwick note, were originally composed as part of the verses on the Highland Girl. "The Affliction of Margaret ——" was originally written for "Lyrical Ballads." From the eighth, ninth, and tenth stanzas we receive an impression of geographical space, a glimpse of supernatural possibilities, and a dread of man's inhumanity, which are characteristic of much of the poetry he composed at Alfoxden.*

The poem beginning "There is a Flower, the lesser Celandine," was ascribed to 1804. It is chiefly remarkable for the poignant pathos of the two lines:

> This neither is its courage nor its choice,
> But its necessity in being old.

On May 8, 1804, Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson: "Poor Coleridge has sailed in the Speedwell."

* After making this conjecture, I was delighted to find that the most acute and accurate of Wordsworth scholars, Mr. T. Hutchinson, says in his edition of the Poems of 1807, Vol. I., p. 173, that "a MS. copy exists, headed 'Affliction of Mary —— of ——; written for the Lyrical Ballads.'" A rejected prologue, of six heroic couplets, was printed by W. Hale White in his "Description of the Wordsworth and Coleridge Manuscripts in the possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman," p. 63.

And again, on July 18, to the same correspondent, she ran on from an animated description of her little nephew to some anxious words about their distant friend. After several ecstatic pages in regard to baby John, she says:

"But, God bless him! he has one grievous fault: he is terribly passionate. . . . The dear Lamb! I call him so, in spite of his impatience, for no Lamb was ever gentler and sweeter or more loving. He hangs about us and hugs us round our necks, and at night, when I go to bed with him, he laughs for joy and puts his sweet little arm round my neck. We have all at this moment (I was called from my writing to see him) been witnessing him climb up the orchard steps. You know what a difficult road it is. Young ladies who are not used to it hobble up and down, though in full health and strength. He went all the way from the new door to the very top of the steps entirely without help, with the utmost caution, yet no cowardice, and never made a false step. You may be sure we followed his heels up the steps. . . . We have had no more news of Coleridge. We now begin to be anxious about him. We are also somewhat anxious about my Brother John, lest he should fall into the hands of the French. . . . William is very well. He begs to be most tenderly remembered to you. He has given himself up to leisure ever since he went to Park House, but he is now going to begin with his poem, and I hope will go on as before. God grant that you may be here next summer. We shall then have the happiness of reading it with you."

The poet's daughter Dorothy—generally known as Dora—was born August 16, 1804. Otherwise, what we may term Wordsworth's personal history, apart from his literary pursuits, was uneventful that year. We catch a few glimpses of home life in Dorothy's unpublished letters to Mrs. Clarkson. The baby Dorothy "is her father's darling, his little pet, and yet he seems as fond of John as it is possible to be." William has had a long interruption from summer company, Mary's confinement, etc., but goes on with his work again. "William and I," she writes on October 14, 1804, "have been on a tour to Ennerdale and Wasdale since Sara left us,

and at our return we found Mr. Montagu and George Dyer. Busy, however, as we have been kept with company, we had no sorrow about their coming—nothing but pleasure. Mrs. Lovel, too, has been with us. [Mrs. Coleridge's sister. Mrs. Coleridge and her children had been at Town-end, too, not long before.] She came unexpectedly, and her we were very glad to see. She is an interesting woman, though of a fretful, unhappy temper." Christopher Wordsworth has lately been married to Priscilla, sister of Charles Lloyd. John Wordsworth, through the interest of Mr. Wilberforce, has just got what he calls " a better voyage "—that is, he does not go to China direct as before. In a letter of January 6, 1805, from Park House, near Ullswater, where Tom and Sara Hutchinson are trying to begin farming again after losing their old farm in Yorkshire, she writes: " It is near seven o'clock, Sunday night. We have just put our two children to bed, and William, Mary, Sara, Joanna, Tom, and George Hutchinson, with Hartley Coleridge, are making a Christmas party round the fire." In a letter of February 10, 1805, she says: " We have built a delightful shed at the top of the orchard [at Town-end]. It is a warm shelter in winter when the frost is not keen. . . . We have no letters from Coleridge, which makes us very anxious about him."

Letters from Coleridge were rare, and finally ceased altogether. To miss his comments on " The Prelude " in the course of composition must have been a grievous loss. Almost all Wordsworth's energy was being directed towards the completion of that work. He reached his goal in the summer of 1805. Most of the short poems composed that year have some relation to the great domestic bereavement which darkened it. This is the more apparent if we remark that the joyous lines " To a Skylark," " Up with me ! up with me into the clouds !" which their author afterwards ascribed to 1805, were probably written in 1801; and that " The Waggoner," its author's longest and most successful attempt at what may, broadly, be called " humour," was perhaps written a year later than has been supposed.

Of the remaining poems, the "Ode to Duty" may well have sprung from a mind tempered by reflection upon the faithful life and heroic death of John Wordsworth, and three others were written to his memory. The lines "When to the Attractions of the Busy World" were probably composed shortly after John's long sojourn at Dove Cottage, from January, 1800, to September 29 of that year.

This beloved brother never came back to Grasmere after the farewell near Grisedale Tarn on that autumn day. His affairs prospered, and he was made captain of his ship, the *Abergavenny*. East Indiaman. On January 24, 1805, he wrote to William from Portsmouth, whence he expected to sail the next day if the wind continued fair. There were four hundred souls on board, half of them soldiers and paying passengers. Captain Wordsworth had invested all his own property in the cargo, and much borrowed money besides, including £1,200 belonging to Dorothy and William, one-third of what they had inherited from their father. Almost the last words of the captain's last letter are about his brother's poems. He was himself of a poetic nature, and his life was itself a true poem. Though less than a year younger than his sister, the simplicity and modesty of his character made him seem like a boy. He loved nature and solitude, and, whether on sea or land, kept in communion with the winds and stars. He loved poetry, too, and carried his brother's verses to sea with him. His life of danger and excitement was like a romance to the quiet inmates of Dove Cottage, and Dorothy spoke of him as their one hope.

The *Abergavenny* was lost on the night of February 5, 1805, off Weymouth, and her brave captain, calm to the last, perished with her. Neither William nor Dorothy ever recovered from this blow. They were henceforth no longer capable of a certain joyousness which used to carry them at times outside of themselves. It is a fatal property of imagination in serious and reflective persons that it makes its possessors suffer every ill in anticipation. No doubt the lonely watchers at Dove Cottage

had lived through many a night of imaginary shipwreck. Still, reality is never quite the same as a dream, and the shock of John's death, with the exchange of sympathy which followed, roused William to a salutary quickening of contact with his fellow-men. This he has acknowledged in his " Elegiac Stanzas suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, painted by Sir George Beaumont." If it had been *his* power to paint, he says, he would once have made a picture of " lasting ease, Elysian quiet without toil or strife."

> So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
> I have submitted to a new control:
> A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
> A deep distress hath humanized my soul.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> Farewell, farewell, the heart that lives alone,
> Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind !
> Such happiness, wherever it be known,
> Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.
>
> But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
> And frequent sights of what is to be borne !
> Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
> Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

This is one of the best examples of Wordsworth's " healing power." Less explicit, but yet very close, is the relation between his personal loss and the " Ode to Duty." When death looks even a healthy and innocent child in the face, joy withers. Yet joy, the poet held was the fountain-head of poetry. He had been saying this to himself as he composed the " Intimations " ode. It was the lesson he thought he had learned from his own experience, and of this lesson " The Prelude " was an elaborate utterance. What then ? When joy departs, does life lose all savour ? Does its grandeur, or even its interest, fade ? Does it become unfit for poetic interpretation ? To these questions the " Ode to Duty " is a confident reply. The whole poem corresponds morally to the tenth and eleventh stanzas of the " Intimations " ode, where the same fresh start is made, on

an impulse springing from a deeper principle than joy. In the "Intimations" the poet does not get beyond

> "the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering,"

unless, indeed, something more is implied in "faith that looks through death." But in the "Ode to Duty" acknowledgment is at last made by this proud man that obedience is a more important law of the universe than joy.

At first he was numb with grief, and his work was suspended. What brought back strength and courage was an effort to write about his brother. As late as May 1 he told Beaumont:

"Time was stealing away fast from me, and nothing done, and my mind still seeming unfit to do anything. At first I had a strong impulse to write a poem that should record my brother's virtues, and be worthy of his memory. I began to give vent to my feelings, with this view; but I was overpowered by my subject, and could not proceed. I composed much, but it is all lost except a few lines, as it came from me in such a torrent that I was unable to remember it. I could not hold the pen myself, and the subject was such that I could not employ Mrs. Wordsworth or my sister as my amanuensis. This work must therefore rest awhile till I am something calmer. I shall, however, never be at peace till, as far as in me lies, I have done justice to my departed brother's memory. His heroic death (the particulars of which I have now accurately collected from several of the survivors) exacts this from me, and still more his singularly interesting character and virtuous and innocent life."

It may be that both the "Ode to Duty" and the "Character of the Happy Warrior" resulted from this attempt. In the same letter Wordsworth states that, being unable to proceed with it, he resumed work on the poem of his own life, and had nearly completed it. Not self-conceit, he protests, but humility, prompted him, for he was diffident of his own powers, and wished to test them in a plain description of what he had felt

and seen. He admitted that he had been prolix, but this defect he had always, he said, found to be incurable whenever it occurred in any of his writings. He hoped Beaumont would say nothing to Coleridge about this redundancy, for he desired to have the latter's unbiassed opinion. At last, on June 3, 1805, he was able to announce to Sir George that he had finished the poem about a fortnight before. "I had," he says, "looked forward to the day as a most happy one; and I was indeed grateful to God for giving me life to complete the work, such as it is." But the day was not happy. He was not satisfied with the poem, the only long labour he had ever finished. He doubted whether he should live to complete "The Recluse," to which the present poem was to serve as a mere portico. But he intended to begin it soon, and when that was done, and a narrative poem of the epic kind, he should consider the task of his life as over. The chief cause of his depression, he stated, was the thought that he could not show the manuscript to his departed brother.

The whole force of Wordsworth's character lies behind all his letters except a few casual notes. They are marked by gravity, fulness of front, and a direct reference to first principles. Yet, while manly and frank, they are rarely unreserved. He opened his heart in his poems, and no doubt in his conversation with three or four persons, but seldom in those letters, at least, which have been preserved. We must remember that his correspondence with his sister and with Coleridge has been almost completely lost. There are, however, three of his letters to Beaumont and one to Southey on the subject of his brother John, in which he lays bare his feelings, and they take their place in this respect with the most intimate of his poems. In the very fire of his affliction, on the day when the news arrived, his thought turned at once to his sister and his friend: "I can say nothing higher of my ever-dear brother than that he was worthy of his sister who is now weeping beside me, and of the friendship of Coleridge—meek, affectionate, silently enthusiastic, loving all quiet things, and a poet

in everything but words. . . . We have had no tidings of Coleridge. I tremble for the moment when he is to hear of my brother's death; it will distress him to the heart,—and his poor body cannot bear sorrow."

John was one of the remarkably large band who perceived the potency for good in the poet before he had yet proved his powers, and who dedicated to him their property or their services: Dorothy, Coleridge, Mrs. Wordsworth, Sara Hutchinson, Raisley Calvert, Sir George Beaumont. "As you will have seen," another of these letters says, "we had little to live upon and he as little (Lord Lonsdale being then alive). But he encouraged me to persist, and to keep my eye steady on its object. He would work for me (that was his language)—for me and his sister; and I was to endeavour to do something for the world." Two former ventures had failed; he had lost by them; the third was to have made them all secure. The obligation to do something for the world remained. "I shall never forget him, never lose sight of him. There is a bond between us yet, the same as if he were living,—nay far more sacred,—calling upon me to do my utmost, as he to the last did his utmost, to live in honour and worthiness."

I judge that Wordsworth had steeled his heart not to lean too heavily upon the hope of immortality. His writings, both public and private, up to this time, are noticeably free from the language of theology. They would not suffice to show that their author held the Christian faith, and, indeed, their reticence might well support the contention that he was still an unbeliever. He rarely uses the name of God, and in the following extract, which contains the first hint of a return to faith, it is to be observed that he employs appellations to which the usage of the eighteenth century had given a deistical rather than an orthodox tinge—"the supreme Governor," "the great Cause and Ruler of things." The reflections are such as the intense realization of what we call "evil" or "pain" or "death" raises in every breast.

"A thousand times have I asked myself," he writes to Beaumont, "'why was he taken away?' and I have answered the question as you have done. In fact, there is no other answer which can satisfy and lay the mind at rest. Why have we a choice, and a will, and a notion of justice and injustice, enabling us to be moral agents? Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the supreme Governor? Why should our notions of right towards each other, and to all sentient beings within our influence, differ so widely from what appears to be His notion and rule, if everything were to end here? Would it not be blasphemy to say that, upon the supposition of the thinking principle being destroyed by death, however inferior we may be to the great Cause and Ruler of things, we have more of love in our nature than He has? The thought is monstrous; and yet how to get rid of it, except upon the supposition of another and a better world, I do not see."

Commonplaces? Yes, no doubt. But not with him. It makes all the difference who utters a commonplace. Wordsworth's inner life is a drama, whose value to the world is due to his perfect integrity and sincerity. Those reflections, from the pen of a lighter man, would carry little weight. Even from Coleridge they might seem too purely intellectual, or founded upon emotions too far developed from their source in instinct. The simplest and the most philosophic minds have ever formulated precisely these and no more convincing arguments for a future conscious life. They are indeed commonplaces. And it is of the utmost importance to know that Wordsworth, of all men, was forced to fall back upon them. In his letter to Southey, who was always urging his own brother, a naval officer, to perform some m litary exploit, such as capturing a prize, and whose language on the subject was often boyishly callous, Wordsworth sent a timely monition, and the passage proves that, in this time of sober vision, he saw for what they are worth the glory of this world and the glitter of arms:

"Oh! it makes the heart groan that, with such a beautiful world as this to live in, and such a soul as that of man's is by nature and gift of God, we should go about on such errands as we do, destroying and laying waste; and ninety-nine of us in a hundred never easy in any road that travels toward peace and quietness. And yet, what virtue and what goodness, what heroism and courage, what triumphs of disinterested love everywhere, and human life, after all, what it is! Surely, this is not to be for ever, even on this perishable planet!"

Throughout that sad spring, *ver tenebrosum* for the Wordsworths, Charles Lamb busied himself collecting information about the wreck, which disproved the newspaper insinuation that Captain Wordsworth had not tried to save his own life even when there was nothing else to save; and Mary Lamb and the good Mrs. Clarkson wrote letters of consolation to Dorothy. One voice was absent and greatly missed—that of Coleridge. As Mary Lamb wrote, in her touchingly simple poem:

> Why is he wandering on the sea?
> Coleridge should now with Wordsworth be.

He had, as we have seen, left England on April 9, 1804, and for some time news of him trickled home through the letters of Dr. Stoddart and his sister, who were friends of the Lambs. But for more than two years and four months he almost entirely failed to communicate with Mrs. Coleridge, Southey, Poole, the Wedgwoods, and the Wordsworths. War was in progress, the mail service was disorganized, and it is of course possible that his letters were intercepted. What is more certain, however, is that his indulgence in opiates, now that he was no longer protected by the tender watchfulness of those who loved him, increased fearfully and made him desperate. He is known to have left Malta September 21, 1805, and probably lived at Naples till the following January, when he went to Rome. Here the stayed till May 18. After that his movements are not definitely known until the date of his arrival off Portsmouth, August 11, 1806. He was very ill at the time of his return, and on one pretext and another postponed

going north until about November 1. In the meanwhile his failure to write or make definite plans, and the alarming accounts of his health, kept his friends on the rack. The Wordsworths had been expecting him daily for eighteen months. The suspense became agonizing when the death of their brother caused them to yearn for sympathy and the drawing together of old ties. "Coleridge's return . . . which surely will not be long," writes Dorothy in January, 1805, to Mrs. Clarkson. And in April she writes to her again: "We look forward to Coleridge's return with fear and painful hope, but indeed I dare not look to it. I think as little as I can of him. Oh, my dear friend, my heart seems to be shut against worldly hope!"

On Saturday, December 11, 1805, she writes to Mrs. Clarkson: "I have for many days been intending to send you a copy of a Poem which William has written for the Journal, suggested by that beautiful passage in Thomas Wilkinson's Tour about the solitary Highland Lass singing at her harvest work." She transcribes the poem, and relates what might have been a very serious mishap. The Third Part of her Journal of the Tour, and five books of William's poem, which had been sent to Mary, who was staying at Park House, were lost by the carrier. They had kept one copy, and Mary was to make a third. Fortunately, the parcel was found later in a field near Kirkstone Pass. The third copy was intended as a gift for Coleridge on his return. It still exists, in a beautiful handwriting—Sara Hutchinson's, probably. They were all much cheered by a letter from Mary Lamb, stating that her brother had heard from Stoddart, at Malta, that Coleridge had reached Trieste on his way home. Dorothy, however, is apprehensive lest the French may capture him. William thinks he will most likely "wheel round and pass through some parts of Hungary and Prussia. It will be a terribly long journey in this cold season, and it is impossible not to have fears for his health, but it is astonishing what he can bear when his mind is at work with his body." Nevertheless, she is extremely anxious.

In October Wordsworth writes to Beaumont: "I am sorry to say I am not yet settled to any serious employment. The expectation of Coleridge not a little unhinges me." He betakes himself in this unsettled state to translating Ariosto and Michael Angelo's sonnets. His comment on the sonnets is so finely expressed, in a letter to Beaumont, that I cannot forbear quoting it here:

"I mentioned Michael Angelo's poetry some time ago; it is the most difficult to construe I ever met with, but just what you would expect from such a man, showing abundantly how conversant his soul was with great things. There is a mistake in the world concerning the Italian language; the poetry of Dante and Michael Angelo proves that, if there be little majesty and strength in Italian verse, the fault is in the authors, and not in the tongue. I can translate, and have translated, two books of Ariosto at the rate, nearly, of 100 lines a day; but so much meaning has been put by Michael Angelo into so little room, and that meaning sometimes so excellent in itself, that I found the difficulty of translating him insurmountable. I attempted, at least, fifteen of the sonnets, but could not anywhere succeed. I have sent you the only one I was able to finish; it is far from being the best or most characteristic, but the others were too much for me."

The only text of Michael Angelo then available was the dressed-up text published by his great-nephew, Michael Angelo the younger, in 1623. It was not till 1863 that the poems were faithfully edited by Cesare Guasti. Wordsworth would have found the true originals even more difficult to translate than the text he used.

As late as February, 1806, they were still uncertain whether Coleridge was well or ill, alive or dead. On the 11th of that month Wordsworth writes to Beaumont: "We have lately had much anxiety about Coleridge. What can have become of him? It must be upwards of three months since he landed at Trieste. Has he returned to Malta, think you, or what can have befallen him? He has never since been heard of." It is the same story in letter after letter. We need him to ease the heartache; we need him to kindle our minds;

we need him in Grasmere, and is he in Trieste? Travels Waring east away?

On August 1, 1806, Wordsworth writes to Beaumont: "I do not know whether my sister has written since we had another account of Coleridge,—I am sorry I cannot say *from* him. He was at Leghorn, with a friend, on their way to England; so that we will still continue to look for him daily." He goes on to say that Coleridge has lost all his papers, including the poems copied for him by Mrs. Wordsworth and Dorothy and five books of "The Prelude." He longs for a conversation with him on the subject of "The Recluse," which is now being rapidly composed.

I have made merely a selection from the references to Coleridge in the correspondence of 1804-1806. Even these few show how the man was loved, and that his friends depended on him as much as he, the most dependent of men, upon them. If the letters that passed directly between him and them had been preserved, what tale of ancient or modern love would surpass this romance of friendship? Even these little outcries of anxiety and pain show the intensity of Wordsworth's affections. It is easy now to understand why he aged so rapidly during Coleridge's absence. He looked old before his time. All his portraits, after the Alfoxden period, make him appear much older than he was when they were taken. He knew and feared his extreme sensibility, but the more austerely he denied it outward expression, the more it wasted him inwardly.

When news of the wanderer's return reached the Lambs in August, it spread like the word of Drake's home-coming in the *Golden Hind*. And then came his strange conduct in delaying to go north, and reports of his changed looks and miserable spirits. Again and again he broke his engagements. Finally, what the Wordsworths had long known became apparent to the whole friendly circle: he could no longer endure the thought of living with his wife. Wordsworth, whose family had grown too large for Dove Cottage, was ready to go anywhere so as to be near him. Plans of this

kind were made and unmade all through the autumn. Owing to Sir George's generous proposals, it was necessary to explain matters to him, and at last Wordsworth and his sister broke their long silence.

"What shall I say of Coleridge? or what can I say?" Wordsworth writes to Beaumont. "My dear friend, this is certain, that he is destined to be unhappy. I would not distress you and Lady Beaumont with this, but it is not to be kept from you, and ought not, loving him and us as you do. I believe I have spoken to Lady Beaumont of his domestic situation, so that the little which I shall now say will not be altogether new, and therefore will, I hope, be less felt. In fact, he dare not go home, he recoils so much from the thought of domesticating with Mrs. Coleridge, with whom, though on many accounts he much respects her, he is so miserable that he dare not encounter it. What a deplorable thing! I have written to him to say that if he does not come down immediately I must insist upon seeing him somewhere. If he appoints London, I shall go. I believe, if anything good is to be done for him, it must be done by me."

Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont some time in the autumn as follows: "My dear Friend, you will judge how much we have suffered from anxiety and distress within the last few weeks. We have long known how unfit Coleridge and his wife were for each other. . . . Poor soul! he had a struggle of many years striving to bring Mrs. Coleridge to a change of temper, and something like communion with him in his enjoyments. . . . I hope everything from the effect of my brother's conversation upon Coleridge's mind."

Her brother, however, was prevented from going to London by the fact that, when Coleridge at last brought himself to write, it was to say that he was coming north. But as the Wordsworths had undertaken to remove from Dove Cottage to Sir George's estate, Coleorton, and it was found that Coleridge had promised to give a course of lectures in London, they were in a quandary. When they had reached Kendal, on their way to Coleorton, which is in Leicestershire, they learned that Coleridge was at Pen-

rith, hovering about Keswick, but not venturing to go there; so they waited in Kendal at great inconvenience, sending off a special messenger to request him to join them there. Sara Hutchinson was in communication with him, and in some way they managed to drive and entice him to Kendal. From Dorothy Wordsworth's letter of November 6 to Mrs. Clarkson, describing the painful scenes which ensued, I infer that he was in a kind of delirium. He arrived at an inn about seven in the evening, and sent for Wordsworth. We must remember that the friends had not met for over two years and eight months. Dorothy says:

"We all [*i.e.*, W. W., D. W., M. H., and S. H.] went thither to him, and never, never did I feel such a shock as at first sight of him. We all felt exactly in the same way—as if he were different from what we had expected to see; almost as much as a person of whom we had thought much, and of whom we had formed an image in our own minds, without having any personal knowledge of him. . . . We—that is, Mary and I—stayed with him from Sunday evening till Tuesday morning at nine o'clock; but Sara Hutchinson and William did not part from him till the morning following. Alas! what can I say? I know not what to hope for, or what to expect. My wishes are plain and fair, that he may have strength of mind to abide by his resolution of separating from Mrs. C., and hereafter may continue unshaken."

He appeared to her utterly changed. He would not talk about himself or them or their common friends. "The divine expression of his countenance," to use her own phrase, was lost. "Alas! I never saw it as it used to be—a shadow, a gleam there was at times, but how faint and transitory." She was sure he was ill, and that he must sink if he did not grow more happy. "I think, however," she adds, "that, if he have courage to go through the work before him, William's conversation and our kind offices may soothe him and bring on tranquillity; and then the only hope that remains will be in his applying himself to some grand object connected with permanent effects." These last ten words were doubtless caught from her brother's lips. How

like him they sound ! and how well he knew the character of his friend ! For, be it observed, not even at this trying crisis did those who truly understood Coleridge think of him as a man of petty or selfish aims. With all his failings, they honoured him as a man, or more than man, dedicated to high and impersonal objects. I have seen nothing to indicate that Dorothy *knew* he was addicted to the opium habit, though it is hard to believe she could have remained ignorant. Naturally, the domestic difficulty seemed to her sufficient to account for everything. In a letter to Lady Beaumont, post-marked December 10, 1806, she says they have had four letters from Coleridge, and " in all he speaks with the same steadiness of his resolution to separate from Mrs. Coleridge, and she has fully agreed to it, and consented that he should take Hartley and Derwent and superintend their education, she being allowed to have them at the holidays." But poor Mrs. Coleridge kept changing her mind.

Coleridge attributed her reluctance to a " mere selfish desire to have a *rank* in life, and not to be believed to be that which she really was," and to a fear of what people would say. It is impossible not to sympathize with the neglected wife, though the judgment of the fair-minded Dorothy Wordsworth 's plainly against her. The separation was not publicly or officially made, but on December 21 Coleridge, with his eldest boy, joined the Wordsworths at Coleorton, and he remained with them about two months. He had made shipwreck of his life, but managed to steer into a friendly haven, with much precious cargo, and refit. It was at Coleorton, in January, 1807, that Wordsworth read to him the poem on his own life; and here, too, lifted from despair by this noble tribute to himself, and with a heart renewed by this appeal to his better nature, Coleridge wrote his pathetic response, " To William Wordsworth, composed for the greater part on the same night after the finishing of his recitation of the Poem in Thirteen Books, on the Growth of his own Mind."

To account for Wordsworth's being at Coleorton, we

shall have to go back about two years, and consider the course of his friendship with Sir George and Lady Beaumont. His letters to them are generally very long, and not always of much biographical interest. He seems to have mastered fairly well, in the case of the Beaumonts, that nervousness which afflicted him when writing to Poole or Lamb or De Quincey. Epistles they truly are, of a kind that had already gone out of fashion. Three subjects in particular are treated in them, again and again—architecture, landscape-gardening, and the philosophy of all the arts.

Sir George was building on a large scale at Coleorton, and sought Wordsworth's advice as a professional student of the relation between natural beauty and the works of man. Starting from a principle formulated by Coleridge, though probably conceived by himself, Wordsworth insisted that it should not be attempted, as in the case of many large estates, to make the surrounding country conform to the style of a mansion, but that the house should harmonize with the country. "Indeed," said the wise counsellor, in words which modern building has fully justified, "in the present state of society, I see nothing interesting either to the imagination or the heart, and, of course, nothing which true taste can approve, in any interference with Nature, grounded upon any other principle." Would that all builders, in the century of ostentatious extravagance which has intervened between that day and ours, had obeyed this canon of taste! With Wordsworth the building of a house was a sacred rite. He held a sublime theory, based on reverence for nature, on close observance of her laws, and on a due regard for man's place in the universe. "If I were disposed," he says, in the letter just quoted, "to write a sermon upon the subject of taste in natural beauty . . . all that I had to say would begin and end in the human heart, as under the direction of the Divine Nature, conferring value on the objects of the senses and pointing out what is valuable in them." This remark borne constantly in mind while reading his poetry will help us to understand many

a passage whose significance might otherwise escape us. "No liberal art," he says in another letter, "aims merely at the gratification of an individual or a class: the painter or poet is degraded in proportion as he does so; the true servant of the Arts pays homage to the human kind as impersonated in unwarped and enlightened minds."

In October, 1806, Sir George lent Wordsworth a farmhouse on his Coleorton estate, and there the family, with Sara Hutchinson, and for awhile with Coleridge and his son Hartley, lived until the following August. In the absence of the proprietor, Wordsworth supervised the laying out of the grounds. He had studied the life of trees. He knew the manner of their growth, and could foresee how a plantation would look after many years. To the groves and lawns, the hedges and fences, the cottages and outbuildings, of Coleorton, he gave many weeks of careful and methodical planning. I should suppose that every landscape-gardener would profit by reading his letters to the Beaumonts, which are full of professional detail. It is true that in them the dogmatic tone which rings through all his later prose begins to appear prominently, but he is discoursing on a subject of which he has gained mastery. People who met him casually in later life, or heard him talk once or twice, pronounced him opinionated. This was never the judgment of those who knew him well, for they realized that what he said was part of a reasoned system.

During the years 1805-1807, while Coleridge was absent, the Clarksons were good neighbours and constant correspondents, and intercourse was maintained with Charles and Mary Lamb. Poole, for a time, seems to have been neglected, not only by Coleridge, from whom he received no word for three years, but by Wordsworth. Southey never had been an intimate friend, and the fact that he was now living at Keswick, did not bring him much closer. Wordsworth found him insipid. In July, 1804, the Wordsworths had a day and a half of Humphry Davy's company, as he passed through

Grasmere on his way to Edinburgh. He was at Grasmere again in the autumn of 1805, together with Walter Scott and Mrs. Scott. The following passage from Lockhart's " Life of Scott " records the occasion:

" About this time Mr. and Mrs. Scott made a short excursion to the Lakes of Cumberland and Westmorland, and visited some of their finest scenery, in company with Mr. Wordsworth. I have found no written narrative of this little tour, but I have often heard Scott speak with enthusiastic delight of the reception he met with in the humble cottage which his brother poet then inhabited on the banks of Grasmere; and at least one of the days they spent together was destined to furnish a theme for the verse of each, namely, that which they gave to the ascent of Helvellyn, where, in the course of the preceding spring, a young gentleman having lost his way and perished by falling over a precipice, his remains were discovered, three months afterwards, still watched by ' a faithful terrier-bitch, his constant attendant during frequent rambles among the wilds.' This day they were accompanied by an illustrious philosopher, who was also a true poet—and might have been one of the greatest of poets had he chosen; and I have heard Mr. Wordsworth say that it would be difficult to express the feeling with which he, who so often had climbed Helvellyn alone, found himself standing on its summit with two such men as Scott and Davy."

Wordsworth's poem is called " Fidelity," and Scott's " Helvellyn." In " Musings near Aquapendente," written in 1837, Wordsworth recalled that hour on

> old Helvellyn's brow
> Where once together, in his day of strength,
> We stood rejoicing, as if earth were free
> From sorrow, like the sky above our heads,

and his memory of the occasion was so vivid that he could tell Miss Fenwick in 1843:

" Sir Humphry Davy was with us at the time. We had ascended from Patterdale, and I could not but admire the vigour with which Scott scrambled along that horn of the mountain called Striding Edge. Our progress was necessarily slow, and was beguiled by

Scott's telling many stories and amusing anecdotes, as was his custom. Sir H. Davy would have probably been better pleased if other topics had occasionally been interspersed, and some discussion entered upon. At all events, he did not remain with us long at the top of the mountain, but left us to find our way down its steep side together into the Vale of Grasmere, where, at my cottage, Mrs. Scott was to meet us at dinner."

Not long afterwards, on November 7, 1805, Wordsworth on foot, and his sister riding a pony, with a wallet containing their bundle of "needments," climbed over Kirkstone Pass to Patterdale, and wandered for a week along the shores of Ullswater. Her account of this outing has been printed in her Journal. It served as the basis for Wordsworth's sketch, "Excursion on the Banks of Ullswater," which he published in his "Guide through the District of the Lakes" in 1835. A comparison of the two records helps one to understand the intellectual relationship of the brother and sister. As it was raining when they reached Patterdale, Wordsworth employed his surplus energy—most men after such a walk would have had none to spare—in writing to Scott. The latter was then preparing his edition of Dryden, and had asked for advice. Wordsworth expresses his satisfaction with Scott's undertaking, and gives in one page of inestimable value his opinion of Dryden's genius. I do not know anywhere in our language an equally brief piece of criticism which is so complete and so just. It is as follows:

"I was much pleased to hear of your engagement with Dryden: not that he is, as a poet, any great favourite of mine; I admire his talents and genius highly, but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this, great command of language: *that* he certainly has, and of such language, too, as it is most desirable that a poet should possess, or, rather, that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the

intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden: but as little, I think, as is possible, considering how much he has written. You will easily understand my meaning, when I refer to his versification of Palamon and Arcite, as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity. Whenever his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects, such as the follies, vices, and crimes of classes of men, or of individuals. That his cannot be the language of imagination must have necessarily followed from this,—that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his works; and in his translation from Virgil, wherever Virgil can be fairly said to have his *eye* upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage."

While they were still wandering amid scenes of peace and happiness, news reached them, on November 10, of the death of Lord Nelson and of the victory at Trafalgar. "Sequestered as we were," writes Wordsworth, "from the sympathy of a crowd, we were shocked to hear that the bells had been ringing joyously at Penrith to celebrate the triumph."

It was while upon this excursion that Wordsworth opened negotiations for the purchase of a property on the shores of Ullswater. Dove Cottage was overcrowded, and he had found a beautiful spot near Patterdale, well suited to his needs. He thought it worth £700, and offered £800, which was refused. Hearing of this, his Quaker friend Wilkinson mentioned the matter to Lord Lowther, who, without consulting Wordsworth, whom he had never met, bought the property for £1,000, and presented it to the poet. Wordsworth, embarrassed by this generosity, insisted on returning to Lord Lowther that part of this sum which he has been prepared to pay in the first place, and accepted only the remaining £200. But his project of enlarging the small cottage he had thus obtained, and removing to it, never came to a head, owing principally to Sir George Beaumont's invitation to Coleorton and his own desire to accommodate his plans to those of Coleridge.

There occurred in 1806 a short renewal of intercourse with the Rev. Francis Wrangham, now very wealthy and eminent in the fashionable and the literary worlds. This old friend seems to have suggested that they should publish the satirical verse upon which they had co-operated ten years before. We have Wordsworth's reply. He says he had determined to steer clear of personal satire. He would be slow to meddle even with public offenders. He declines, therefore, to lend any assistance to the proposed publication, and asks to have his old satirical verses destroyed. He is afraid that if they were published without his name the authorship would leak out, and he does not wish that to happen.

William Hazlitt renewed his acquaintance, as we learn in a letter from Southey dated December 14, 1803, in which he says: "Hazlitt, whom you saw at Paris, has been here; a man of real genius. He has made a very fine picture of Coleridge for Sir George Beaumont, which is said to be in Titian's manner; he has also painted Wordsworth, but so dismally, though Wordsworth's face is his idea of physiognomical perfection, that one of his friends, on seeing it, exclaimed, 'At the gallows—deeply affected by his deserved fate—yet determined to die like a man'; and if you saw the picture you would admire the criticism."

Southey cannot be accused of excessive reverence for his great contemporaries. He judged them with jaunty self-assurance, habitually assuming that some quality or other of his own set him in a superior position. The overwhelming respectability of his character, his prudence, learning, industry, and kindness, were insufficient to draw Wordsworth to him; hence there is very little record of intimacy between them in the years we are considering. He had, with reference to ideas, movements, and general principles, a fatal inability to see things as they really were, uncoloured by the sentiments which, for the time being, predominated in his own mind. He was therefore an uncommonly bad prophet, though he was for ever prophesying. It is to his credit as a

critic, however, that so early as 1804 he made the following prediction about Wordsworth, if he really meant half of what he said: "Wordsworth will do better [than Coleridge], and leave behind him a name, unique in its way; he will rank among the very first poets, and probably possesses a mass of merits superior to all, except only Shakespeare. This is doing much, yet he would be a happier man if he did more."

The following letter from Dorothy to Mrs. Marshall accounts for the doings of the Wordsworth family in the spring of 1806:

"GRASMERE,
"*Monday, June 2nd.*

"Sara Hutchinson is with us. . . . My brother has been in London for two months; he returned on Monday week in great spirits and much improved in his health, and very glad to be in quiet at home again, though he enjoyed himself highly in the gay world, being resolved to see all that it was possible in the time. I wish he had come home by Leeds [where Mrs. Marshall lived] instead of Manchester. [He came to be in time for Mrs. Wordsworth's third confinement.] . . . He brought us very pleasing accounts of my uncle Cookson's family, all of whom he saw but one, and of my brother Christopher and his wife and child. They live very nicely in a nice house at Lambeth.* As for us, we shall at last be driven out of our cottage, for we do not think we ought to live here another winter, and with a third child it is so very unwholesome for a large family, the rooms being so small and low."

The poet's second son, Thomas, was born June 16, 1806.

* Christopher Wordsworth was Rector of Lambeth. He was soon to become Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, in which office he seemed "pompous and priggish" to Edward Fitzgerald in his undergraduate days (see Fitzgerald's "Letters," p. 381). He was a voluminous writer of theological books, and an important personage in the ecclesiastical world.

CHAPTER XIX

NEW SONG

Let us reserve five great poems completed between 1803 and 1807—the ode on "Intimations of Immortality," the "Ode to Duty," the "Character of the Happy Warrior," "The Prelude," and the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle"—and consider now the others written in that period. They number about fifty, and, although in many cases the date of their composition is not known, they were nearly all published in the two volumes of 1807. Almost every piece in this collection is of high quality, and, furthermore, we have here a remarkable range of thought and variety of craftsmanship. Had these volumes been printed anonymously, critics might well have been excused for regarding them as the work of several authors. In "The Horn of Egremont Castle" we have a tale of chivalry such as Scott might have attempted in one of his literary raids across the border. In "Stray Pleasures," "The Power of Music," and "Star-gazers," we have three light, colloquial pieces, loose of structure, in experimental verse forms, yet each leading to a moral, "not of this noisy world, but silent and divine." The memories upon which they were founded reached back to an earlier time, 1791 or 1793, when the poet, as he tells us in "The Prelude," was making it his serious business to catch at incidents of street life that might serve to connect its turbulence and change with what is permanent in nature. It is interesting to observe that in almost all the passages or whole poems in which Wordsworth describes the town he indulges in a free, rapid, and comparatively careless manner, in marked contrast to the compact and scrupulous style of his descriptions of natural objects.

Of the latter and more characteristic kind we have many examples among the poems written between his tour in Scotland and the spring of 1807—examples of nature's power to soothe, to satisfy, to elevate the heart. They are of a less agitated strain than the "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey," less abounding in obstinate questionings, less audacious in the claims they make for the human spirit. We find in them, not the wild joy of communion with elemental force, but a restful willingness to accept what nature may deign to bestow. The madness and gladness of discovery have given way to steady happiness founded on a humble and well-tested faith. Perhaps the best instance of what I mean is the little poem "Yes, it was the Mountain Echo," with its admonition to listen, ponder, and hold dear, the voices that come we know not whence. The perfect sonnet "To Sleep"—"A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by"—shows the conquest he has achieved over his unquiet soul, and how nature no longer haunts him like a passion, but has become a "Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health." We think sadly of poor Coleridge and his awful lines on "The Pains of Sleep." The thought forces itself upon us, too, that Wordsworth's gains as a man were imperilling his genius as a poet. There is a more authentic *aura* of inspiration, a diviner, even if a thinner air, in "Tintern Abbey," "Resolution and Independence," "At the Grave of Burns," in Shelley's "Alastor" and "Ode to the West Wind," in Coleridge's "Dejection," in Leopardi's "La Ginestra," in "Les Nuits" of Musset, than in any song of "homefelt delight" and "sober certainty of waking bliss." It is one of Wordsworth's royal distinctions that, like Shakespeare and Goethe, the poet in him survived the attainment of happiness; that he, like them, passed from melodious agony to serene harmonies. But that the gain for art, for philosophy, for personal completeness is won at the expense of poetry, in the purest and most absolute sense of the word, there can be no question.

Joy, Wordsworth once thought, is the motive and background of poetry. But joy is an intense, mysterious, elemental passion, and its closest fellow is not tranquillity, but pain. And pain inspired the most poignant note in these short poems printed for the first time in 1807, the lines entitled "A Complaint," and beginning "There is a change—and I am poor."

Acting on the theory that personal references tended to diminish the permanent value of poetry, Wordsworth excluded some pieces from his published works and modified others, substituting, for example, fanciful for real names, as "Emmeline" for "Dorothy." Fortunately, he more often violated this law. Yet he has left us many a mystery. In the present instance, we can only guess that the friend whose coolness is the subject of "A Complaint" was Coleridge.

The four sonnets long afterwards entitled "Personal Talk" show Wordsworth in an unusually familiar attitude. They express a mood and reveal some of his tastes. Later in life, to judge from conversations reported by lionizing visitors, he yielded only too often to the impulse of which we have here a first glimpse, and talked very complacently about himself, his likes and dislikes. In early manhood he was extremely reticent on such subjects, and his conversation was remarkably impersonal. With Coleridge he could spend whole days and nights in discourse on great themes.

Of pure tuneful lyric melody there is rich abundance in these poems. Perhaps the most exquisite example is

> O Nightingale! thou surely art
> A Creature of a fiery heart

—verses that begin with a wild cry of delight, in the boldest Elizabethan strain, and end with a gravely happy and strictly modulated passage:

> He sang of love with quiet blending,
> Slow to begin, and never ending;
> Of serious faith, and inward glee;
> That was the Song, the Song for me!

For ages, poets had heard the melancholy of the nightingale's varied voice; it had spoken to them of

unforgotten wrong and sorrow; rarely had they—Milton was one of the exceptions—broken through the bonds of tradition and caught its tone of oblivious ecstasy. Musically, the transition from the stanza in which the nightingale warbles its allegro, to the one in which the stockdove gently measures out its "homely tale," is marvellous. To students of Wordsworth's life, the thought must come that he had now, whether through renunciation or through a withdrawal of the gift of the gods, ceased to vibrate habitually to the "tumultuous harmony and fierce" that echoes not seldom in his early songs. The Wordsworth of later years is all in the second stanza. If our experiences and sympathies are so much more limited than his that we can enjoy only the poetry of adventurous youth, his life and his art henceforth will not appeal to us. In that case, he might have died at the age when Shelley ceased, and we should be no losers. But far otherwise is it for us if we have the breadth and patience and wisdom to go with him into the second half of his existence, appreciating the value of completeness and integrity.

It has often been said, with an obvious degree of truth, but also with undiscriminating exaggeration, that Wordsworth was deficient in humour. No doubt he lacked the briskness for a quick return upon himself, the sceptical faculty, the sense of human littleness, by which most men protect themselves from being overwhelmed by the importance of nature, their fellows, and themselves. He was generally either too happy or too sad for humour, too deeply interested in what seemed to him the significant aspects of things. And it is true he was never humble. But we need not confound humility with humour. Admitting, as I suppose we must, some defect—and it is only too apparent if we think of him in connection with Scott and Coleridge, not to mention Lamb—fairness requires that three reasons why the world considers him devoid of humour should be utterly rejected. The first is that fashionable society and the subservient critics who voiced the cruel and absurd views of fashion were by *parti pris*, by

vanity, and the instinct of self-preservation, determined to regard as unworthy of notice the simple people, scenes, and incidents, that Wordsworth made the subjects of his verse. If a poet chose Alice Fell as a heroine instead of some Angelica or Rosamond, he must, they declared, be a man without humour. And, secondly, Wordsworth did not "pose" well. He was not at ease among strangers. When he became celebrated, and visitors, often very solemn persons, or so frivolous they made him solemn, went on a pilgrimage to hear him talk, he injudiciously yielded to their desire, and discoursed, with a royal freedom and royal pride, about himself. He was too honest to pretend to think otherwise than as he really thought. He would not descend to Cæsar's artifice, who, after all, only tries to heighten his majesty by suppressing the first-person pronoun, or to Goethe's, who gave his worshippers the impression of being more interested in their affairs than in his own. The third injustice is one he himself did to himself, and yet at an age when he may well be pardoned, for he was no longer himself. When he dictated to Miss Fenwick, in 1843, those rambling, solemn, inexact, and often senile notes on his poems, he had already come within the shadow of death. But down to the point at which we have arrived, down to middle life, Wordsworth often shows a playful vein. We see it in his letters to Wrangham and in many short pieces of verse. "Peter Bell" was grossly misunderstood because it is a medley of deep seriousness and mild humour.

And another long poem, composed in 1805, read from manuscript to Charles Lamb shortly afterwards, dedicated to that discriminating humorist in 1819, and appreciated by him, was conceived and executed throughout in a spirit of broad and genial playfulness. It was appropriately classified by its author as a poem of the fancy, though here and there it contains flashes of awe-struck imagination. The metre is fitted to the mood, octosyllabic couplets, alternating freely between iambics and trochees, and with there and here a feminine ending, a short line, or an irregular rhyme. It is a moving

picture of the old highway between Ambleside and Keswick as seen by night and in a thunderstorm, when familiar objects are transformed and vague unrealities excite without subduing the mind. According to Wordsworth's noble and original theory, imagination deals with truth, with the permanent; fancy, with fleeting aspects of things and light impressions of the observer. "The Waggoner" is a typical application of this latter faculty. It falls into a class with many famous examples, such as the "Epistles" of Horace, nine-tenths of "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan," and a considerable portion of Cowper's "Task," though I do not mean to assert that it equals any of these in sportive grace. It is valuable as showing Wordsworth completely at his ease, and serves also as an extreme boundary on one side of the vast field over which his genius extends.

There remains an important group of short poems written between 1803 and 1807 to which we have not adverted, poems expressing love of country and of liberty. At this period of his life, as heretofore, Wordsworth's religion was drawn from two sources—external nature, and the principles he deduced from human character. The latter may be summed up as a belief that liberty is a primary right of man, and essential to his welfare. He had not abated one jot of his social faith, though by this time convinced that France had thrown away her chance of leadership. As he looked over the world, it appeared to him that Britain was, after all, the strongest champion of liberty. Having accepted this conclusion in general, he straightway acted upon it, as we have seen in the case of the sonnets of 1802. The particular crisis brought about by Napoleon's threat of invasion made an opportunity not to be neglected without guilt, even though doubts and scruples may often have raised their heads. To a man so deeply affected by beauty, there must have been unspeakable joy in feeling free at last to celebrate, with a clear conscience, the incomparable beauty which is associated, in England, with practices of which Wordsworth had previously

disapproved. An unbeliever is pitifully torn between conflicting principles and tastes when standing in some lovely English cathedral close. His reason disapproves of the institution; his memory dwells on historical incongruities; he wonders how, in the future, these edifices are ever to be related to the needs of men; on the other hand, his eye revels in the noble forms which he beholds, and his imagination would fain persuade him of their sacredness.

Wordsworth had now made up his mind what the general line of his conduct should be. But traces of the inner conflict had not all disappeared. Charles James Fox died September 13, 1806, and from Wordsworth's poem, "Loud is the Vale! the Voice is up," in which he deplored the hourly expected dissolution of this liberal statesman and friend of the Revolution, calling him by implication "great and good," and a man "from God sent forth," we must infer that Fox's political principles were still not altogether contrary to his own. Yet only two months later, having heard of the battle of Jena and the triumphant progress of French arms in North Germany, whence Napoleon threatened to blockade England, he calls on his countrymen to be "wise, upright, valiant," since they are "the last that dare to struggle with the Foe." What is perhaps the grandest of his political sonnets followed a little later—"Two Voices are there; one is of the sea." Liberty is his theme again in the deep-felt sonnet, "To Thomas Clarkson, on the final passage of the bill for the abolition of the slave-trade, March, 1807," and here, certainly, he saw no divided duty. It is interesting that Dorothy Wordsworth, who was intimate with Wilberforce in her girlhood, was now the neighbour and dear friend of the Clarksons.

Wordsworth cultivated the sonnet more frequently in his boyhood and youth than one would be able to conjecture from his published works alone. In her letters from Forncett to Jane Pollard, Dorothy, it will be remembered, mentions her brother's sonnets. One of his earliest poems among those subsequently published

was a sonnet, "Calm is all nature as a resting wheel." His study of Italian with Agostino Isola, his veneration for Milton, and his hard practice in translating Michael Angelo, gave him complete mastery of the form. The sonnet was to be henceforth the favourite vehicle of his opinions, as distinguished on the one hand from the records of his direct observation of nature, and on the other from the larger outlines of his philosophy. These sonnets covered an extremely wide range—wider, I venture to say, than those of any other English poet in any age. If there be a contrary impression, it is due to the consistent personality which shows itself in them all, and not to a lack of variety in their subjects. Being vehicles of opinion, they are often passionately dogmatic. Some, however, and these among the very best, are free utterances of happy moods, made with no design except to receive and give pleasure. Even in these, however, the poet is still a teacher, though of general rather than systematic truths. Several sonnets of this kind were written, apparently, in 1806, as, for example, "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room," "The world is too much with us," "A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by," and the two splendid sea-pictures—"Where lies the land to which yon ship must go?" and "With ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh."

One of the last rewards of an intimate study of Wordsworth's works is that one comes to realize their architectonic unity. This is most impressive. One learns to look for character and principle even in the slightest particular. There are no strokes of mere caprice. This great body of prose and verse is informed with one spirit. The whole is an organic union. The productions of one year prepare the reader insensibly for those of the next. So firm was Wordsworth's intellectual constitution that even the most seductive or overwhelming personal influences, while they often affected him deeply, began only after a considerable period to bear visible results. And when we take for granted that he has developed one great theme to the fullest extent possible for him, we find it recurring, transformed

and broadened, but still the same. This is nowhere better shown than in the five major poems which were completed between 1805 and 1807—namely, the "Ode to Duty," "Character of the Happy Warrior," "The Prelude," the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle," and the ode on "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." In the first two of these he appears to give up or greatly modify the "genial faith, still rich in genial good," which guided his younger days—faith in joy as the principle of a rich and useful life.* In the "Ode to Duty," the poet cannot forget, and is unwilling to condemn, the innocent souls who by their birthright, their divine heritage of essential goodness, live "without reproach or blot." The disciple of Rousseau and Godwin, still in revolt against the doctrine of innate depravity, even while recognizing that some natures fall, and need thenceforth the disciple of conscience, reserves a limbo of the innocents. I like to think he had in mind his sister. That he was conscious of his boldness in thus setting up his private faith against the creeds of Christendom is evident from a comparison of the poem as printed, with the copy of the second and third stanzas published by W. Hale White from an original manuscript in the possession of T. Norton Longman. These cancelled stanzas are more outspoken than the form that was finally adopted. They read:

> There are who tread a blameless way
> In purity, and love, and truth,
> Though resting on no better stay
> Than on the genial sense of youth:
> Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot;
> Who do the right and know it not:
> May joy be theirs while life shall last
> And may a genial sense remain when Youth is past.

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* Ernest Hartley Coleridge, in a delightful article on "The Lake Poets in Somersetshire," published in Vol. XX. of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, says that his grandfather had a short name for the indispensable condition of creative genius: "He called it joy, meaning thereby not mirth or high spirits, or even happiness, but a consciousness of entire and therefore well being, when the emotional and intellectual faculties are in equipoise."

Serene would be our days and bright;
And happy would our nature be;
If Love were an unerring light;
And Joy its own security.
And bless'd are they who in the main
This creed, even now, do entertain,
Do in this spirit live; yet know
That Man hath other hopes; strength which
elsewhere must grow.

These variances of text show that the poet was not merely groping towards a more finished expression of his thought, but hesitating between an extreme ethical idea and a more guarded one. The opening of yet another rejected stanza indicates that he made a distinction between conscience, as an inborn voice, and a sense of duty, as the result of experience:

O Power of *Duty*! sent from God
To enforce on earth his high behest,
And keep us faithful to the road
Which Conscience hath pronounc'd the best.

There is a possible connection between the "Ode to Duty" and a passage on "the Beautiful Soul" in Schiller's "Anmuth und Würde." It was a favourite idea with some of the German Romanticists that certain souls, through natural innocence, were secure from temptation, and needed not for their guidance the precepts of moral law. Theirs it was to bask in the sunlight of divine favour. Goodness in them was instinctive. So far as I can perceive, there was no firmer basis for this view than pure sentimentality. For the theological dogma of sanctification there was a doctrinal basis and more or less support in experience; Schiller's notion had, I suppose, only the warrant of congruity with the trend of contemporary feeling. It was, indeed, very characteristic of that strange, foolish revolt against law which was one of the main currents of Romanticism. German novels and poetry were full of *schöne Seelen*. So were the romances of Chateaubriand. In behalf of these "characters" without character, the rules of the game of life were supposed to

be relaxed. They could sin without blame or moral danger. That was the outcome,—the invention of an impossible type in fiction.

The passage in Schiller's essay may be loosely rendered as follows:

"In a beautiful soul the moral feeling in all the emotions has at length grown so secure that it can fearlessly leave to impulse the guidance of the will, without fear of contradiction from the latter. Therefore, in a beautiful soul, particular acts are not properly moral, but the whole character is. No particular acts, moreover, can be accounted praiseworthy, because the satisfaction of impulse can never be a subject of praise. The beautiful soul has no other merit than that she exists. With ease, as if mere instinct were at work through her, she performs the most painful human duties; and the most heroic sacrifice which she extracts from natural impulse strikes us as a voluntary effect of this very impulse. Hence she herself never perceives the beauty of her own conduct, and it never occurs to her that there could be other acts and other feelings; whereas a well-drilled pupil in the school of moral rules, obedient to his master's command, will be ever ready to give the strictest account of the relationship of his actions to the law."

In an unpublished letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Mrs. Clarkson there is an indication that she, too, had caught up this idea of a *schöne Seele*, who does what is right without effort. Speaking of Mrs. Rawson, of Halifax, she says: "Mrs. R., the very best-tempered woman and the most thoroughly intent upon doing what is right of any person I ever knew, and all without effort from a blessed nature." The date—July, 1807—is significant.

The "Character of the Happy Warrior" was probably written either very late in 1805 or early in 1806, when the sad undercurrent of Wordsworth's thought, flowing from his brother's death, was brightening with pride in his noble life and final constancy. There is a note appended to the poem in the edition of 1807, stating that the death of Lord Nelson "directed the Author's thoughts to the subject"; it is supported by a long

Fenwick note to the same effect, and by a letter from Southey to Scott, dated February 4, 1806. In several places, however, and for one in a letter to Beaumont, written February 11, 1806, enclosing a copy of the poem, Wordsworth speaks of Nelson in very qualified terms. There is much in the poem which is manifestly not applicable to him. It is by no means a eulogy on the military life. It is a portrait of a hero, in peace or in war. If a soldier is placable and compassionate, his gentleness is the more to be commended because he is " doomed to go in company with Pain,

And Fear and Bloodshed, miserable train."

The happy warrior, or hero, lives in obedience to an indwelling law. In the " Ode to Duty " this law is identified with the power that does " preserve the stars from wrong," a power universal, cosmic, and divine—

L' amor che muove il Sole e l' altre stelle.

In man it is reason,

a power
Which is our human nature's highest dower.

Thus far, the second poem is a magnificent illustration of the grand and general truths enunciated in the first. But Wordsworth would not take these great steps forward in moral revelation without bearing along the sound and imperishable conquests of his earlier thinking. One of these, his own peculiar contribution to the store of human wisdom, was his sense of the sublime and prophetic in childhood. Reverence nature, was to him the first and great commandment; and the second was like unto it: Venerate the intuitions of childhood. Who, except Wordsworth, would have defined the hero as

the generous Spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought ?

In these lines we have a spiritual link between the two poems whose theme is Duty, and the three that celebrate the divinity of Childhood and Nature. But before passing to the latter group, let us note that the

"Character of the Happy Warrior" is, by its origin and its tone, an elegy. Wordsworth was unwilling to obtrude his private grief upon the world; with lofty and solemn reticence, he utters in this poem no direct word about his brother; his grief and consolation are raised to a noble generality. And when surmising what particular heroic figures were woven together in the composition, we must not forget Michel Beaupuy.

Down to the end of the minstrel's invocation—*i.e.*, to the hundred and fifty-sixth line—the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle" is nothing more than a splendid border ballad. We have the conventional short metre, the customary trappings of romance, the local names, the blending of popular tradition with mediæval history. Sir Walter might have been proud of having written it, and wrote as well more than once. Then comes the wonderful turn. In four grave decasyllabic quatrains, stately yet tranquil, the poet's own voice dispels the scene he has conjured up: the baronial hall, the scutcheons, arms, and tapestries, the throng of lords and ladies, the ecstatic minstrel, dissolve and vanish; the light of day, our own day, trembles through the fleeting shadows. We hear, with a feeling which would have been incomprehensible to the audience thus dismissed, how the Clifford's heart was "soothed and tamed." For being yet a child when nature received him to herself, he had grown up the wisest and best of his wild race:

> Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
> His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

The conception is modern; more than that, it is thoroughly Wordsworthian. Many a poet would have been content with the song, would have deemed it a complete work of art, sufficient in itself. The great and original genius of Wordsworth, the power that consecrated him to the sublime office of transmitting feelings that flow from *religious* perception, would not allow

him to withhold the last touch, which made this poem immortal. The whole power of him is behind these four stanzas, the weight of his disciplined and constant purpose the activity of his ardent love, the splendour of his intellectual light.

The great " Intimations " ode is a stumbling-block to prosaic and a temptation to over-speculative minds. To the former it seems a mass of disconnected though splendid beauties, and when they try to find its indwelling idea they either despise what they think they have discovered, as too thin and vague to be of much consequence, or condemn it as a profanely audacious attempt to meddle with things divinely hidden from human sight. To minds that love " those wingy mysteries in divinity, and airy subtleties in religion, which have unhinged the brains of better heads," the poem offers congenial employment. Wordsworth himself, in a most regrettable Fenwick note, made an unnecessary and almost humiliating concession to pragmatical and timid readers. " I think it right," he says, " to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief "—*i.e.*, belief in a prior state of existence. " It is," he continues, " far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of man presents an analogy in its favour." This deprecation of popular judgment is unfortunate in several ways. Historically it misrepresents the author as he was when he wrote the ode, for there is no evidence that he then believed in a written " revelation," and every evidence that he did not believe in " the fall of man." And, furthermore, it has diverted attention from the central idea of the poem, an idea supported by his own experience and that of thousands, and has brought into undue prominence, even by denying his intention to do so, a subsidiary and purely speculative notion.

The ode was probably conceived in the spring of 1802,

immediately after he had written the nine lines which are its germ, and of which he used the last three as its motto:

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky:
> So was it when my life began;
> So is it now I am a man;
> So be it when I shall grow old,
> Or let me die!
> The Child is Father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety.

On March 26, 1802, Dorothy records in her Journal: "William wrote to Annette, then worked at 'The Cuckoo,'" and, listening to the cuckoo's song, we remember, he could beget again the golden time of childhood. In the evening of the same day, she adds, "he wrote 'The Rainbow,'" and next day "William wrote part of an ode." On June 17, she says, "William added a little to the Ode he is writing." The poem was continued at intervals during the next four years, and appeared in the edition of 1807, after which it was never much altered. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Wordsworth's statement in the Fenwick note that "two years at least passed between the writing of the first four stanzas and the remaining part."

In these stanzas, with an exquisitely light touch the poet describes an experience which perhaps is rare—I have known many persons to disclaim it for themselves—but which has startled many sensitively organized youths, observant of their mental states. It is an experience that vindicates for childhood a superior delicacy of perception, a superior impressibility as compared with later years. So vivid are these sensations, so deep these emotions, that long afterwards, in favourable moments, they flash into consciousness. Science would probably say that some hidden coil of the brain unrolls. The person to whom these forgotten memories recur connects them rather with some object or incident which appears to have occasioned them, and they are called "recognitions." We seem to perceive again

something perceived long ago, and never since. It is like the repetition of a dream. To certain minds these flashes come not seldom, but chiefly before middle life. They illumine and measure the distance the soul has travelled, for they recall and place side by side with blunted and decaying faculties the fresh and glorious powers of unworn childhood. The momentary joy is succeeded by a sense of depression, as we realize that the years, our busy servants, have robbed us of life itself. This is the theme of those first four stanzas.

A natural deduction, and one, as we have seen, which Wordsworth would regard as highly significant, is that the perceptions and feelings of childhood have peculiar value. Compared with them, the testimony of later years is dull and confused. The moral instincts of childhood have a similar directness and vigour, and should be obeyed. The child, by his acute perceptions, his tense grasp of reality, and his unsophisticated habits of mind, is closer to truth than the man, and finds in nature an all-sufficient teacher. But here the poet checks himself, and he puts this inference to a test in the tenth and eleventh stanzas. The result marks a great change in his philosophy. Though acknowledging almost all that he had claimed for childhood, he remembers that there have been gains as well as losses, and sings:

> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind;
> In the primal sympathy
> Which having been must ever be;
> In the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering;
> In the faith that looks through death,
> In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Mankind claims him, and the sway of reason. But while thus extending his allegiance, he repeats his vows to nature:

> And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
> Forebode not any severing of our loves!
> Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
> I only have relinquished one delight
> To live beneath your more habitual sway.

The whole of "The Prelude" does not say more, as to the central principle that had governed Wordsworth's early life, and had lately been broadened, but not abandoned. A favoured childhood close to nature, the acceptance of Rousseau's doctrine of original goodness, a tempering due to rich experience of human love and reverent admission of painful duty—this is the history of Wordsworth's soul hitherto. The golden record runs through six great poems: "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe," "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," the "Ode to Duty," the "Happy Warrior," "The Prelude," and the "Intimations." A final great document in support of Wordsworth's creed is his "Answer to the Letter of Mathetes," published in *The Friend*, in 1809. Though I shall have more to say of it in its place, I cannot forbear quoting a glorious passage which restates the main theme of the "Intimations" ode. Speaking of the Generous Young Man, he says: "Granted that the sacred light of childhood is and must be for him no more than a remembrance. He may, notwithstanding, be remanded to nature, and with trustworthy hopes, founded less upon his sentient than upon his intellectual being; to nature, as leading on insensibly to the society of reason, but to reason and will, as leading back to the wisdom of nature. A reunion, in this order accomplished, will bring reformation and timely support; and the two powers of reason and nature, thus reciprocally teacher and taught, may advance together in a track to which there is no limit." And, again, he speaks of nature as "a teacher of truth through joy and through gladness, and as a creatress of the faculties by a process of smoothness and delight." Diffidence and veneration, he says, "are the sacred attributes of youth; its appropriate calling is not to distinguish in the fear of being deceived or degraded, not to analyze with scrupulous minuteness, but to accumulate in genial confidence; its instinct, its safety, its benefit, its glory, is to love, to admire, to feel, and to labour." As there are two types of mind, the synthetic and the analytic, the one that is impressed by

resemblances and the one that feels differences, so in the individual are there creative as distinguished from critical faculties, and the former are most alert in childhood.

That the central theme of the ode is the magisterial sanctity of childhood is further indicated by the three lines from "The Rainbow" which the poet prefixed to it:

> The Child is Father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety.

"Piety" is here used in its original sense, of reverence for filial obligation. The Man is to respect the Child surviving in him, to obey its monitions, to work upon its plan. What, then, is the subsidiary idea, which the Fenwick note unduly emphasizes, upon which commentators have spent themselves, and which, to be sure, is elaborately indicated in the title of the ode? It is a surmise, nothing more, that the excellence of childhood may be an inheritance from a previous and presumably superior state of existence. This is not, like the other idea, original with Wordsworth, in the only senses in which any such thought can be original—that is to say, either inborn or something conquered and assimilated. It was altogether derivative, extrinsic, and novel to him. It is connected with no other of his writings. It is alien to his mind. He habitually poetizes the facts of nature and human experience, shunning equally the cloudland of metaphysics and the light mists of fancy. But he had, as his soul's companion, the greatest speculative genius our race ever produced; and a dream of a prenatal state of the soul, superior in happiness and wisdom, had been embodied by Coleridge in a poem several years before. It is the "Sonnet composed on a journey homeward, the author having received intelligence of the birth of a son, Sept. 20, 1796":

> Oft o'er my brain does that strange fancy roll
> Which makes the present (while the flash doth last)
> Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past,
> Mixed with such feelings, as perplex the soul
> Self-questioned in her sleep; and some have said
> We lived, ere yet this robe of flesh we wore.

O my sweet baby, when I reach my door
If heavy looks should tell me thou art dead,
(As, sometimes, through excess of hope, I fear)
I think that I should struggle to believe
Thou wert a spirit, to this nether sphere
Sentenced for some more venial crime to grieve;
Did'st scream, then spring to meet Heaven's quick reprieve,
While we wept idly o'er thy little bier.

In his note to this sonnet, in the edition of 1797, Coleridge acknowledged his indebtedness to Plato's " Phædo." Plato's argument, or perhaps we should call it his poetical suggestion, is that " if there is an absolute beauty, and goodness, and an absolute essence of all things; and if to this, which is now discovered to have existed in our former state, we refer all our sensations, and with this compare them, finding these ideas to be pre-existent and our inborn possession—then our souls must have had a prior existence."

In Wordsworth this conception seems to have been merely derivative—how different, therefore, from most of his ideas, to which the praise in Coleridge's " Biographia Literaria " so justly belongs, when he says (Chapter XXII.) that a characteristic excellence of Wordsworth's is " a weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won, not from books, but from the poet's own meditative observation." " They are *fresh*," he adds, " and have the dew upon them."

As one who habitually rises late can hardly believe his senses when he sees yesterday's commonplace world transformed by dawn into an enchanted garden of trembling roseate mysteries, so we wonder and so we doubt in reading the " Intimations " ode. Its radiance comes and goes through a shimmering veil. Yet, when we look close, we find nothing unreal or unfinished. This beauty, though supernal, is not evanescent. It bides our return, and whoever comes to seek it as a little child will find it. The imagery, though changing at every turn, is fresh and simple. The language, though connected with thoughts so serious that they impart to it a classic dignity, is natural and for the most part plain. The metrical changes are swift, and follow the

sense as a melody by Schubert or Brahms is moulded to the text. Nevertheless, a peculiar glamour surrounds the poem. It is the supreme example of what I may venture to term the romance of philosophic thought.

If we bear in mind what is the important and profoundly Wordsworthian idea of the ode, and what the secondary and less characteristic notion appended to this, we shall find few difficulties of detail.

CHAPTER XX

CRISIS OF MIDDLE LIFE

THE great variorum edition of "The Prelude," published in 1926 by Professor de Selincourt, has confirmed the opinion which I expressed ten years before, that this poem was much altered by Wordsworth between the time when he began it, in the last decade of the eighteenth century, and its publication after his death. In re-editing his works he was accustomed to revise them for the sake of euphony and exactness of description, and sometimes to soften the statement of his earlier social or religious views, making them more conservative and orthodox. "The Prelude," being the most intimate revelation of his experiences and personal beliefs and not intended for public perusal during his lifetime, was particularly subject to changes of the latter kind. Any man telling the story of his own life selects, omits, and points its incidents according to his present spirit and purpose. Wordsworth, knowing he was a great poet and would take his place sooner or later as one of the guides and teachers of mankind, desired to leave a memorial of what he had attained, rather than of what he had abandoned, and consequently the poem as printed in 1850 did not represent correctly his inner life as it was in 1805, and still less as it was between 1792 and 1802. He had altered it in two important and indeed essential respects: frank ardour for the Revolutionary cause, with all its implications, had given place to a more cautious and balanced tone, and more especially the pantheism of the early versions had been overlaid with orthodox theistic terms.

For these reasons we should not depend without question upon "The Prelude" in estimating the extent of the contrast between Wordsworth as he was before

middle life and Wordsworth as he was after the profound change which came over him then, and of which we have authentic records in "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle" and the "Ode to Duty." These two poems mark the turning-point in his life, the beginning of a complete reversal of his speculative views, and a significant alteration of his poetic style and methods. They should be read in the light of all the biographical knowledge we possess about their author. Their meaning is never caught by the casual reader.

Even as it finally appeared, there are passages in "The Prelude" which are, I believe, the real cause of its being held back so long. Without utterly defacing the picture, Wordsworth could not have told the story of his early manhood more guardedly, yet he feared that, even so, it might do harm. We must remember that one great national panic succeeded another while the poem lay waiting for the light. Napoleon was scarcely disposed of before "Reform" began to alarm the Tory mind; and between the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 there was little time to breathe. With an honourable though mistaken sense of obligation to mankind there may have coexisted a dread of the effect upon his own chosen course of life. Without minimizing the part played by modesty, I suggest that these other motives would be no less characteristic of Wordsworth. His conduct as we have observed it in his childhood, youth, and early manhood, was courageous, determined even to the point of obstinacy, and yet regulated by prudence in practical affairs. It was well said of him that he combined the qualities of a great poet and a country attorney.

The resultant of these inner powers and of certain external forces became apparent between 1803 and 1807. He was now middle-aged, a husband, a father, a property-owner. His confidence that through his writings he might affect the lives of his fellow-men was beginning to be somewhat widely justified. He looked forward to a future of influence, and seriously felt the responsibility

attaching to intellectual leadership. The years of obscurity were past. In them, without much interference from the world, and with few concessions, he had gone through many agitating spiritual experiences. He had read and travelled at his own discretion. It was unlikely that any new discovery in the realm of thought would startle or greatly attract him. He had long enjoyed intimate relations with the most contagious mind then existing. Coleridge's absence and silence had thrown him back upon himself, and caused him to go through a process of *recueillement*, in which he had estimated, co-ordinated, and sealed his own principles. At an earlier stage he had swung far to one extreme in political and social philosophy. Farther in that direction he could hardly have gone. The apparent failure of the French Revolution and the real danger to English liberty from the ambitions of Napoleon made it necessary now to alter his course unless he were to become futile. Real consistency demanded a readjustment of the old principles to the new facts, rather than a reckless continuance in the course of protest. Yet his backward swing was not violent. Its momentum was retarded by many a surviving element of friction. No man, however, can resist altogether the influence of respected friends. The conservatism of Walter Scott was so clearly a legitimate and indispensable part of his large and attractive personality that Wordsworth, in becoming more intimate with him, was almost forced to admire his political principles. Sir Geórge and Lady Beaumont were ornaments of their class, and in every way worthy of Wordsworth's affection. It is no wonder if association with them modified his views on the whole subject of class distinctions.

From results which became visible after a few years, we may surmise that a change was taking place in his attitude towards those institutions, practices, and modes of expression, by which religious feeling is outwardly manifested. I cannot believe that the foundations of Wordsworth's religion were really shaken either in middle life or in old age. Nature and experience were still, I

think, the sources of his faith, reason its guide, and the whole round of life its proper sphere. But at this time he began to respect and appreciate, and later he learned to love, the specific means by which Christendom has attained and embodied religious conceptions. His own way had not been the beaten track, but he had never been either indifferent or intolerant in matters of religion, and now his interest really widened. He surrendered nothing of his own. He did not " go over " to popular Christianity. He learned to include it in the great circle of his sympathy. Unlike many others who have once been rationalists, and have later come into conformity with the Church, Wordsworth did not subject his reason to the sway of vague mystical impressions, did not call " belief " what was only hope and earnest longing. In a very considerable degree his acceptance of the terms and methods through which religion takes on a specifically Christian character was caused by political considerations. He had in view the general welfare of his country as well as his own personal needs. The elements common to the established Church and to Nonconformity were not what attracted him. It was rather the principle of establishment itself, the idea of a national conscience perpetually voicing its adherence to whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. In after-years he wrote much besides the " Ecclesiastical Sonnets " that may be described as Christian poetry; most of this, however, expresses not so often world-wide or even personal, as Anglican religion, considered with reference to national welfare. Though it is unfortunate that his genius should have thus limited its free play, we must remember that religion, in a far broader sense, was from the beginning, and continued to be always, the subject of his song. " The Old Cumberland Beggar," by the " semi-atheist " of 1798, is surely no less religious than the sonnet on " Old Abbeys " by the Churchman of 1822. Instead of an advance of faith, there was in the main a recession. In fixing his trust upon particular ordinances, he lost some of that generous and open-hearted feeling

which is of the very essence of religion. In so far as he became the supporter of a system, he surrendered his freedom. In accepting a tradition he lost the gift of prophecy. Nature and the universal heart of man spoke to him less of their divine mysteries.

Other reasons besides those that moved Wordsworth were meanwhile determining Coleridge to a somewhat similar course. His writings after his return from Malta have a changed tone. He has become a child of the century. He has left the narrow but solid ledge of rationalism, and is groping through mystical seas. He curses what he once adored. From 1807 we may date his appearance as the champion of Christian theology. But this is a new Coleridge. And it is pertinent to observe that his distrust of reason was coincident with, and probably consequent upon, a decline in moral strength. He came home more terribly enmeshed than ever in his evil habit, and profoundly discouraged. As the keen-eyed Dorothy Wordsworth saw at once, he was no longer the same man. The glory was departed. He was heart-struck, reduced, humiliated. And here the eternal question arises: Does a man in that condition see the truth more or less clearly than one who treads the heights of reason? This is not a subject which can be treated here. It has been discussed amply and frankly in the famous parallel between Pascal and Montaigne in the third book of Sainte-Beuve's "Port Royal." We can only note the fact that there was a complete and fundamental change in Coleridge's philosophy, and prepare our minds to judge whether this would affect Wordsworth.

Few men pass through the crisis of middle life without a loss of ideality. Wordsworth escaped this. But it cannot be denied that, while he held to his ideals with unweakened grasp, many of them were different from those of earlier years. He lost much of his confidence in human nature. His sympathies became less general. His admiration went out more and more to the privileged classes, to persons of distinction, to notable events in history. The poor and humble still figured in

his poetry, but in smaller proportion, in a less true proportion, considering the part they play in life. Liberty remained dear to him; but equality, which was a vastly more important and imperilled principle, now became a matter for doubt and endless qualifications. The change may not have amounted to apostasy; it was certainly reaction.

The crisis was sharp. Its result was unmistakable. It affected the course of his life and the character of his poetry. Looking at him as he stands in 1807, having then completed the five great poems which embodied the philosophy of his early manhood, and begun "The Excursion," which represents a later stage, we realize that his opinions henceforth will have a very definite trend. He has still a long life to live, but its vicissitudes will be slight, its outward history peaceful, its inner changes gradual and in one direction. Even had he not written any poetry, his life down to this point would have been worth telling; he would have a place among the English friends of the Revolution; and if he had expressed his philosophy in prose alone, he would remain an authority in æsthetic criticism. After 1807 his life is of interest almost solely for the sake of his art, for there is nothing else that distinguishes its last four decades, in any singular degree, from the lives of many other Englishmen of his time. Letters, anecdotes, records of his conversation, and other biographical material, are far more abundant for this later period than for the years when he was comparatively obscure. Owing to this fact, it is the aged Wordsworth that the world knows most about, and this is extremely unfortunate.

But I cannot agree with the opinion that he had produced nearly all his good work before 1808. His art, both as poet and as prose-writer continued to grow, and some of its most interesting developments occurred long afterwards. It still had fresh turns and quickenings. His versatility was only very gradually exhausted. His technical skill was never lost. Moreover, there came to him with passing years a deepening of conviction, which gave him increasing authority on many subjects.

We have observed a change in Wordsworth, due partly to the natural crisis of middle age, partly to disappointment at the course of political events, and partly to association with a new set of friends who held conservative views. The criticism with which his publications from 1800 to 1807 were met was not without its effect also. Sturdy as he was in holding fast to principles, he often found it possible to modify their application, or even to alter them if good cause were shown. This can be seen in the numerous revisions to which he subjected his poems. He took advice cautiously, even grudgingly, but, on the whole, the remarkable fact is that he took so much. By far the most telling criticism was that which appeared in *The Edinburgh Review*. It was scarcely the less effective because some of the articles dealt with his poetry indirectly, being reviews of Southey's books. It is amusing enough now to find Wordsworth and Southey dragged into court together, on a charge of rebellion against the laws of taste. Southey is treated as the more prominent and well-known offender. But a suspicion is entertained that in some way Wordsworth is the deeper and more dangerous conspirator. There has never been any justification for the term " the Lake School of Poets." Coleridge lived only a few years in the Lake country, and his poetry shows hardly any traces of that residence. To associate Southey's poetry in this way with Wordsworth's is to use language without thinking of its meaning. But the phrase originated early, and was, though misleading, convenient for reviewers. It was thought desirable to hold Wordsworth responsible for the poetical mediocrity of Southey, and to find them both guilty of entertaining the social heresies which Southey had long before recanted.

The Edinburgh Review was founded in 1802. In its first number appeared an article on Southey's " Thalaba." Ample satisfaction was here given to those conscientious scruples expressed in the motto of the magazine: *Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur.* It was written by Francis Jeffrey, who had been waiting for an oppor-

tunity to controvert the doctrine contained in Wordsworth's prefaces and exemplified in "Lyrical Ballads." Jeffrey had a high appreciation of good literature, ancient and modern, a high sense of the importance of poetry, and a sincere desire to protect the public from false teaching. The great value of the noble works included within the circle of his taste made him hesitate to break the ring at any point in order to include something new and different. But he was not unreasonable. He disapproved of Wordsworth's innovations on very strong grounds. To anyone holding Jeffrey's view of human nature they must ever be sufficient grounds. And in forming this view he showed remarkable penetration and a characteristically vigorous, massive way of pushing through evidence to a sound judgment of causes and motives. To suppose that his adverse opinion of Wordsworth's poetry was determined solely, or even chiefly, by the fact that he had a strong taste for the "classics," or, in other words, that he was so hampered by literary prejudices as to be unable to accept a novel artistic doctrine, is to do injustice to his intellectual alertness. The trouble lay deeper. His heart had not been touched by a true sense of human brotherhood. His prejudice was political. It might, indeed, better be termed religious; for it originated in a fundamental unwillingness to acknowledge the divinity in man. It is startling to find that the first words of his review of "Thalaba" stamp him at once as an enemy of the living light: "Poetry has this much, at least, in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago, by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question." False as this statement is in both of the propositions involved, it has a doctrinal, not an æsthetic basis. That he was preparing to attack Wordsworth as well as Southey is shown in the next paragraph, which begins: "The author who is now before us belongs to a *sect* of poets that has established itself in this country within these ten or twelve years. . . . That they are *dissenters* from the established systems in poetry and criticism is ad-

mitted, and proved, indeed, by the whole tenor of their compositions."

He remarks with creditable acumen that some of their leading principles " seem to have been borrowed from the great apostle of Geneva." He denies them any real originality, and detects as first among the sources of their material " the anti-social principles and distempered sensibility of Rousseau — his discontent with the present constitution of society—his paradoxical morality, and his perpetual hankerings after some unattainable state of voluptuous virtue and perfection." If the venturesome word " unattainable " and the slanderous word " voluptuous " were omitted from this charge, it would be just in every particular. The critic has discovered the real origin of what was most dynamic in the new poetry. He has laid bare its connection with a revolutionary view of society. He has also, by his hostile and contemptuous tone, disclosed his own position, and bound himself to a definite course of action. He is aware of what the new movement involves. These authors, he declares, " constitute at present the most formidable conspiracy that has lately been formed against sound judgment in matters poetical, and are entitled to a larger share of our censorial notice than could be spared for an individual delinquent." Setting aside for a moment their moral and political tendencies, he engages in a specious and plausible argument against the theory of diction and choice of subject propounded in Wordsworth's Preface to " Lyrical Ballads."

" Their most distinguishing symbol," he says, " is undoubtedly an affectation of great simplicity and familiarity of language. They disdain to make use of the common poetical phraseology, or to ennoble their diction by a selection of fine or dignified expressions. . . . A poet who aims at all at sublimity or pathos is like an actor in a high tragic character, and must sustain his dignity throughout, or become altogether ridiculous. . . . The language of the higher and more cultivated orders may be presumed to be better than that of their inferiors; at any rate, it has all those associations in its

favour by means of which a style can ever appear beautiful or exalted, and is adapted to the purposes of poetry by having been long consecrated to its use."

"The chief mischief of this new system is not confined to the depravation of language only; it extends to the sentiments and emotions, and leads to the debasement of all those feelings which poetry is designed to communicate. . . . The different classes of society have each of them a distinct character, as well as a separate idiom. . . . The love, or grief, or indignation, of an enlightened and refined character is not only expressed in a different language, but is in itself a different emotion from the love, or grief, or anger, of a clown, a tradesman, or a market-wench. The things themselves are radically and obviously distinct. . . . The poor and vulgar may interest us, in poetry, by their *situation;* but never, we apprehend, by any sentiments that are peculiar to their condition, and still less by any language that is peculiar to it."

The absurdity of such remarks is sufficiently apparent now, but we are in danger of forgetting that they probably met with the approval of most subscribers to *The Edinburgh Review* in 1802. And it is useful to read them now, in order to appreciate Wordsworth's originality and courage, and the extent of his ultimate triumph. But the passage that indicates Jeffrey's real animus—which, moreover, he takes no pains to conceal—is the following, in which he describes the moral character of the "new school":

"A splenetic and idle discontent with the existing institutions of society seems to be at the bottom of all their serious and peculiar sentiments. Instead of contemplating the wonders and the pleasures which civilization has created for mankind, they are perpetually brooding over the disorders by which its progress has been attended. They are filled with horror and compassion at the sight of poor men spending their blood in the quarrels of princes and brutifying their sublime capabilities in the drudgery of unremitting labour. For all sorts of vice and profligacy in the lower orders of society, they have the same virtuous horror and the same tender compassion. While the existence of these offences overpowers them with grief and confusion, they never permit

themselves to feel the smallest indigination or dislike towards the offenders."

Except for the gratuitous term "splenetic and idle," could the most enthusiastic eulogist have penned loftier praise? Could a clearer title to the name of Christian patriot have been bestowed upon the two poets? But Jeffrey thought he was condemning, not justifying. In *The Edinburgh Review* for October, 1805, he criticizes Southey's "Madoc," and again abuses the supposed "school." His grand opportunity came when Wordsworth's "Poems in Two Volumes" appeared in 1807. Losing no time, he flew to the attack, in the October number of *The Edinburgh*. Exulting, he unmasked his batteries, for this time the enemy was fully exposed. But what was the real purpose of these preparations? To crush the spirit out of a sensitive and happy man who, because he was more sensitive and more deeply happy than others, had felt impelled to take the world into his confidence as to the sources of his innocent delights; to shame him for telling of his childlike intimacy with nature; to make him resolve never again to lift the veil of conventional reticence. The only conceivable excuse for Jeffrey's onslaught is that he sincerely regarded Wordsworth as a menace to society. Expressing his relief that the demerits of the Poems free him from all doubt or hesitation as to the justice of his former censures of "Lyrical Ballads," he regrets that he did not declare himself against that work "with still more formidable and decided hostility." Finally, after denouncing Wordsworth's poetry as trash, except "when, by any accident, he is led to abandon his system, and to transgress the laws of that school which he would fain establish on the ruin of all existing authority," he retires with the complacent sense of having crushed this offensive "caterpillar of a commonwealth."

Byron's cruel and ignorant attack in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," 1808, helped to form in the public mind a false notion of Wordsworth. The lines that concern him are as follows. Pretending to address Southey, Byron says:

Next comes the dull disciple of thy school,
That mild apostate from poetic rule,
The simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay
As soft as evening in his favourite May.

* * * * *

Who both by precept and example shows
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose.

* * * * *

Yet let them not to vulgar Wordsworth stoop,
The meanest object of the lowly group,
Whose verse, of all but childish prattle void,
Seems blessed harmony to Lambe and Lloyd.

It cannot be denied that Wordsworth was affected by the hostile criticism of Jeffrey and a number of less influential reviewers. Owing to several other causes, and yet also to this criticism, he drew inspiration henceforth far less directly from nature and more from history than had been his wont. The episodes of his own everyday life and of the simpler lives of dalesmen and chance wayfarers ceased almost suddenly to give him material for poetic interpretation. How complete the change was may be seen by merely examining a table of his poems, arranged by years, in the order of composition. Between the completion of "The White Doe of Rylstone," in 1807 and 1808, and the writing of "Laodamia" and "Yarrow Visited," in 1814, lie six or seven relatively barren years, though, of course, it must be remembered that in them "The Excursion" came to maturity. More significant than their infertility is the character of their lean product. The subjects bear no resemblance to those formerly chosen, and many startling examples of reversion to conventional poetic diction might be cited, of which no others, perhaps, are so extreme as the first lines of a poem written in 1812:

Mark how the feathered tenants of the flood, etc.

It really seems as if Jeffrey had succeeded in making him pay "due honour and authority" to "that ancient and venerable code," the "established laws of poetry." But so many other influences were at work on the poet, and the results were so complex, that we must consider

this epoch of his life more closely later, and meanwhile revert to "The Prelude," which was finished, at least in its original form, in 1805. It was kept in manuscript until after the poet's death, when it was published under the supervision of his secretary, Mr. Carter. The title, which is not a happy one, was suggested at that time by Mrs. Wordsworth. When "The Excursion" was published, in 1814, Wordsworth, in his Preface, made the following reference to the earlier work, now generally esteemed the greater, which we call "The Prelude":

"It may be proper to state whence the poem, of which 'The Excursion' is a part, derives its Title of THE RECLUSE.—Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. That Work, addressed to a dear Friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's Intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it was a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society; and to be entitled, 'The Recluse,' as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.—The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the ante-chapel has to the body of a gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices."

The entire work had a threefold object: to test the poet's powers, to pay a tribute to the friendship and genius of Coleridge, and to serve as an introduction to "The Recluse." Its subject is nominally the growth of a poet's mind, and, indeed, many of the traits and experiences which it records are typical. Nevertheless, "The Prelude" is less remarkable for generality than for particularity. It really describes the spiritual development of its author. Wordsworth was a little apprehensive lest his friends might think him conceited in writing to the extent of nearly eight thousand lines about himself. He protested that his real feeling was diffidence and a shrinking from the more elaborate task of writing "The Recluse."

Where fate has played a part is in the fact that the author of this poem was a young man during the most important crisis in human history since the Reformation, and was drawn, by some power beyond our calculation or his, to the central scene of that great drama. Had he been born ten years earlier or later, the story of his life would have mattered much less to the world. In spite of many inferior passages and some that are obscure; in spite of frequent prolixity; in spite of many a page dulled with pedantic terms taken from the jargon of psychology, terms that retain no sensuous colour or movement whatever, and are mere intellectual counters, "The Prelude" is the greatest long poem in our language after "Paradise Lost." One might break it, somewhat rudely, into three consecutive parts: the first describing, in fragmentary fashion, the poet's boyhood and youth, and the scenes amid which he grew up; the second, more compact and continuous, narrating his experiences in France; and the third, speculative and dogmatic, setting forth a theory of the mind and of nature, and of their mutual relations. It is only in the last three books that this third subject entirely predominates. The first eleven books are less abstract. Readers to whom Wordsworth's philosophy seems unsubstantial in its foundations and narrow in its superstructure may therefore find satisfactions of their own

in the poem. But Wordsworth, with some awkwardness, it is true, tries to convince us that all parts of it are contributory to certain conclusions of a highly abstract kind. Happily, its high fortune does not depend entirely on the success of this endeavour. And yet there the endeavour is, and we must not lose sight of it.

In protest against the old psychology, which contented itself with classifying the powers of the mind, as intellect, feelings, and will, with their further analysis, he declares that the mind is one. Its thoughts have their source in feeling, and of feeling there is no conscious beginning. He seems to imply some sort of continuity between the soul of a new-born child and a larger, pre-existent life. He insists on the superiority of the "living mind" to all external things, and glorifies Imagination as a power which can work with nature and even constrain her. By thus exalting the mind of man above "the frame of things" as having an existence independent of nature, he places himself among the Transcendental philosophers. Not only in "The Prelude," but frequently in his other speculative poems, he proclaims himself a philosophical idealist. This view of the relation between man and nature was not his when he wrote the "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey" in 1798. Although even then the time was past when nature aroused merely

> a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye,

yet he would then have considered it blasphemy to speak of the mind of man as overleaping nature. He had recently learned to hear "the still, sad music of humanity," but he had also become aware of

> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts
> And rolls through all things,

and was

> well pleased to recognize
> In nature and the language of the sense
> The anchor of *his* purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of *his* heart, and soul
> Of all *his* moral being.

That was the vision of a free, undaunted spirit, one who was not afraid to be called "a semi-atheist," and who did not care whether the promptings of his genius chimed with orthodox theology. One of the purposes of "The Prelude," painfully and redundantly achieved, is to renounce this pantheism, for it is nothing less. Wordsworth was travelling with Coleridge, with German philosophy, with his age. He was reacting against the great positive, naturalistic movement of the preceding century. He was breaking with his own past, abandoning his own faith. There are many reasons for regretting that he lost courage or hope at this point. Had he held fast to what was surely no debasing materialism and no morally enervating pantheism, he might have continued to be a living bond between the highest thought of the eighteenth century and that revival of science which was coming presently, and which makes the interval of reaction appear a time of weak fears and cowardly refusals. And there will always be readers who feel that his truest and least imitable poems are those in which he is content to follow nature, as one who finds in her all he needs to know. However honourable the scruples and the sense of responsibility which caused him to recede from that spontaneous acknowledgment of nature as a divine power, superior to man and yet approachable by man in a spirit of kinship, the step involved more than a sacrifice; it was a moral error. Ought not he to have remained content, to whom had been vouchsafed high intercourse with something so divine as the voice which spoke to him near Tintern Abbey, or the Wisdom and Spirit of the universe which still held fellowship with him in Germany?

Whether or not we regret that he left vacant the priesthood which had once been his, and which Shelley

was to accept later, we must acknowledge that there was more loss than gain for poetry. "The Prelude" relates only the beginning of the change. One is left to infer, on finishing its perusal, that the poet, having lost joy, the vital principle of poetic creation, has at length recovered it, and thus passed safely through the only danger to which his genius was liable. But the recovery of joy was followed by complacency, and this by self-consciousness, and this again by timidity. Of his complacency we have a foretaste in "The Prelude" itself, especially in the eighth book. He seems to be consciously leading up to a triumphant proclamation of his own success in obtaining a right view of nature and of man. This fault shows itself only in certain reflective passages—in those, namely, which were written in 1805 or inserted later. The passages of real reminiscence are free from it. The ninth, tenth, and eleventh books, which relate his experience in France, are more vivid and spontaneous, more fluently written, and more unhampered by "system," than the other parts of the poem. A great theme, sufficient for epic treatment, here gave him something of the epic poet's detachment. Considering "The Prelude" not now as the unfolding of a philosophy, but as a narrative, these books constitute its climax. It becomes more evident, at every reading, that his spiritual connection with the Revolution made him a thinking, suffering man. This connection gave him what Newman describes as "the true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values and determining their mutual dependence." He went to France a susceptible boy; he returned a man, with a philosophy and a purpose.

It is a thousand pities that he renounced this philosophy and changed this purpose. When they ruled him, and even while they were loosening their hold upon him, he wrote his best poetry. As a pæan of triumph the conclusion of "The Prelude," therefore, extending over the last three books, is premature. He upbraids

himself for having " scanned the moral world," and we ask, Without this moral scrutiny where would have been his contributions to " Lyrical Ballads " ? He is at pains to renounce reason, having found a better guide in an instinctive reliance upon nature and the immemorial customs and faiths of mankind; but the time was at hand when instincts were to be interpreted as accumulated acts of reason. In the last book of all, which is relied upon to impress us most, we find his new attitude fully delineated. The author has now formally set up as a teacher of safe philosophy. His tone is pietistic, his plan drearily systematic, his language abstruse. He sees not men and women so much as bundles of psychological traits. He professes to have found or invented a new instrument for compelling nature to give up her secrets, and by means of it claims the power of looking beyond her mere facts to her spiritual laws.

This instrument, which he defines with elaborate care and describes as a transcendent function of poetic minds, is Imagination. The distinction which he draws between Imagination and Fancy does not always seem clear; they often appear to differ only in degree. But Wordsworth considered it vital. However that may be, the fourteenth book is an anticlimax. The style is neither fresh and simple, as in some of the earlier parts, nor dignified and austere, as in many high places throughout the poem. It is a style he rarely, if ever, used before 1805, but only too often in later years. Pure, colourless intellectual terms loom up like icebergs in almost every sentence. Of sensuous quality there is very little. The passion seems forced. The diction is almost as far removed as possible from " the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation." That the boldness of Wordsworth's genius has vanished is shown even by so small a matter as the frequent recurrence of the cautious double negative, the use of which became one of his worst habits of composition—*e.g.*, " endowments not from me withheld," " no insufficient plea," " not unworthy of regard." The summary of the entire poem, as given in the fourteenth book, describes the

stilling of a noble struggle. Somehow the poet's early solicitude for human welfare, the agonizing sympathy and the audacious hope, are set aside as evil; satisfaction with nature's balm and the established order of society replaces the old yearning, and is hailed as a moral conquest.

One curious detail must be noticed: the poet dates his change of heart much earlier than a careful study of his life would seem to warrant. We have seen that his conversion was scarcely begun before 1805. Yet, by foreshortening the time, he gives the impression that it occurred ten years before. It is very strange, for example, that in the seventh book, entitled "Residence in London," he records chiefly the mere surface-shows of the town, street scenes and public amusements, when we know, from the evidence of his letter to Bishop Watson and much else, that his mind was busy with deeper and more engrossing affairs. The fine humanitarian tone of that passage in Book XIII. (lines 186-204), which dates from before 1802, proves that the change had not come when it was written.

Wordsworth's genius, at its best, expressed itself in three large groups of poems corresponding more or less closely to three periods of his life. The poems of each group are related to one another, in that they refer to the same class of subjects and are bound together by a common purpose: the first group comprises most of his early works, their subjects being the unadorned features of nature and some of the common incidents of life which fell under the poet's observation, and the ruling purpose being the quite simple one of representing the truth, and of communicating the joy and strength which he derived from life. These poems were of a new kind. They represent the union of exact knowledge with creative imagination, of plain language with passionate feeling. They are at one and the same time science and art. They imitate nature without attempting to interpret her, implying thus the most profound reverence. Wordsworth as here we see him is almost unique among poets, and certainly supreme in this kind. "Lucy

Gray" will perhaps be remembered when all other English poetry of the century has been forgotten. The period ends almost abruptly in 1807.

The second group comprises those fine high endeavours of his to penetrate to a soul of things supposed to lie behind nature's impassive face. So long as Wordsworth remained faithful to his old ideals and constant in courage and self-confidence, his philosophy, too, is of the highest order of originality. We have in the "Intimations," for example, a kind of poetry entirely different in origin and purpose from the direct type just described; but it is almost equally characteristic of Wordsworth, and almost as lonely in its excellence. The period when Wordsworth could produce such poetry extended scarcely farther than 1807.

Throughout the rest of his life, except for a few instances when the spirit of his youth revived, his observation was oblique, and his reflective powers were dominated by principles not formerly his own, and not easily reconcilable with the best that he had been. Of the immense number of poems which he wrote in these last forty years, nearly all are upon a high level of attainment; but standing alone they would not suffice to justify a claim of great superiority, except in one kind of work—that is, the historical and political sonnet. Large as is his achievement in this third kind of characteristic excellence, he is by no means so great here as in his poems of simple life and his poems of pure reflection. "The Prelude" stands in the centre of his life-work because it represents all three of these kinds. It is based on the sound habits of direct and unprejudiced observation which gave us the short poems in "Lyrical Ballads" and in the edition of 1807. It is full of youthful fervours, which not even the over-scrupulous revisions of later years could extinguish. The truly Wordsworthian philosophy still animates its reflective parts, even though half repressed in a system from which poetry instinctively withdraws. And it indicates in advance the course of Wordsworth's later sympathies. Even "The White Doe of Rylstone" and "The Excur-

sion," which were finished seven years later, were conceived and in large part composed before the end of that fateful year 1807. Apart from a few surprises, such as " Laodamia," the muses held little in store for him except a vast number of splendid sonnets.

That beautiful poem, " The White Doe of Rylstone," has rarely been understood. It was begun in 1807, and completed and published in 1815. Based upon an ancient ballad in Percy's collection, " The Rising of the North," which commemorates the Catholic insurrection in the twelfth year of Elizabeth's reign, the period, the characters, and the setting are all of a kind which appealed to the romantic spirit. Feudal pride and valour, the pathos of monastic ruins, a subtle suggestion of the preternatural, and an atmosphere of moonlight —all these elements of Romanticism are present here. Never before had Wordsworth accepted so fully the complete mechanism of Romance. It might plausibly be inferred that this poem in every respect marked a fresh departure in technical method and a changed estimate of human values. But if it be studied deeply, it will reveal a meaning so intimately associated with Wordsworth's old ideals, that questions of time and circumstance, of technique, form, and fashion, fall into secondary rank. " The White Doe of Rylstone " is essentially one more great autobiographical poem. Though ostensibly objective and historical, it is the final message of Wordsworth's personal and original religion, the parting utterance of his poetic youth. The master of Rylstone Hall, with eight of his sons, joins the great Catholic earls, Percy and Neville. Francis Norton, his other son, endeavours in vain to dissuade them from taking up arms. The young man resolves not to fight on either side, but to follow the Northern levies, alone and weaponless, in order to be of service to his kindred in the hour of disaster. To his sister Emily, a Protestant like himself, he prophesies the coming desolation, but enjoins upon her a life of strict quietude at home. She is not to take sides, even in thought:

Farewell all wishes, all debate,
All prayers for this cause, or for that!
Weep, if that aid thee; but depend
Upon no help of outward friend;
Espouse thy doom at once, and cleave
To fortitude without reprieve.

The father and eight warrior sons are taken and slain. Francis, after comforting them in prison and trying to save their banner, which his sister's fingers had wrought, is likewise slain. The maid is left with nothing, seemingly, to live for—an exile, a wanderer

Driven forth like a withered leaf.

Yet strength remained in her loneliness, a cold, high self-possession:

Her soul doth in itself stand fast,
Sustained by memory of the past
And strength of Reason; held above
The infirmities of mortal love;
Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable,
And awfully impenetrable.

Returning to her father's ruined domain, she was surprised one day by a visit from a white doe, which had once been her playmate, and henceforth, from the companionship and love of this faithful creature, she drew, even on that "trouble-haunted ground," comfort and peace:

With her Companion, in such frame
Of mind, to Rylstone back she came;
And, ranging through the wasted groves,
Received the memory of old loves,
Undisturbed and undistrest,
Into a soul which now was blest
With a soft spring-day of holy,
Mild, and grateful melancholy:
Not sunless gloom or unenlightened,
But by tender fancies brightened.

This is the song of one who had hoped for the success of a lost cause, and had been heartbroken over the event—of one, however, who had found balm in the quiet exercise of reason and the visitings of imagination.

Perhaps it is even possible that in the character of Francis, who abstains from violence for conscience' sake, Wordsworth paid tribute to the pacific principles of his own early manhood, when, as we have seen, the wickedness of war was an oft-recurring theme in his writings. There is more than this, a sense of the futility and transitoriness of action. A note of almost oriental renunciation runs through the poem. Human endeavour, the whole fabric of human deeds, are destined to pass away and leave no trace. Only Nature and Mind and the Peace of God endure. Salvation is found not through acting, but through suffering. The utmost that can be expected is consolation for hopes deceived, and this consolation comes unbidden, with gentle soft approach, from inward springs. Thus comforted, but with its active instincts rebuked, the soul begins

> its reascent in sanctity,
> From fair to fairer; day by day
> A more divine and loftier way.

We think at once of the concluding lines of the tenth stanza of the "Intimations" ode, realizing, however, that the poet has meanwhile risen to thinner air and a more attenuated philosophy:

> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind;
> In the primal sympathy
> Which having been must ever be;
> In the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering;
> In the faith that looks through death,
> In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Disillusion, he seems to tell us, lurks at the end of all effort. But when the ruin is most complete, Imagination, the power by which the mind admits to itself the healing touch of nature, can half regain what was lost. Other meanings this wonderful poem may have, but surely it teaches that active life is vanity that passeth away, though the soul, through suffering and submission to nature, may yet win communion with what endures

for ever. The essence of the whole poem lies in the lines prefixed to it, a quotation from " The Borderers ":

> Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
> The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
> 'Tis done; and in the after-vacancy
> We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:
> Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
> And has the nature of infinity.
> Yet through that darkness (infinite though it seem
> And irremovable) gracious openings lie
> By which the soul—with patient steps of prayer—
> May pass in hope, and, though from mortal bonds
> Yet undelivered, rise with sure ascent
> Even to the fountain-head of peace divine.

Wordsworth has been so often and so justly praised as the poet of joy, that it is worth while to realize to what depths of passionate regret he himself had penetrated. If he consoles us, it is because he at times was disconsolate. If he strengthens us, it is because he realized the weakness, the pathos, of humanity. It was a point of duty with him to keep silent his fears and heart-rending cares. Now and then they break through, however, and the revelation enhances our respect for him and enlarges his authority as a teacher of wisdom.

On the other hand, " The White Doe of Rylstone," regarded in connection with the general trend of Wordsworth's thinking at the time he wrote it, is a confession of human failure so sweeping that the Western mind refuses to join in it. Behind our intellectual, no less than our material achievements, throbs the vital spark of self-trust. And to the Occidental, self is chiefly reason and will. Ascetic moods of religion come and go, and no doubt an ascetic denial of reason and of will remains as a constant element in Christianity, warning us against too complete confidence in ourselves and in our works; but on the whole we refuse to believe that there is a fundamental antagonism between faith and reason or between faith and will. Protestantism, in particular, revolts against this assumption. Wordsworth's discouragement, we feel, was deeper than the facts of life warrant. We feel that the fault must have

been partly his own, that he had for some time been reading human nature too despondently, and therefore mistakenly. He had given up a hope which, after all, and in spite of every disappointment, makes life worth living. His confession of this loss leads us to infer that his intellectual and volitional powers had suffered a blow. Substituting the word Imagination for the word Faith, he seems to make the same retreat from rational and active existence that was recommended by St. Francis of Sales and by Pascal. If William Watson's famous lines were a complete epitaph, if

> Rest ! 'twas the gift he gave; and peace ! the shade
> He spread, for spirits fevered with the sun,

—if this were all, then indeed " The White Doe of Rylstone " should be accounted his final message. But there is so much more in Wordsworth than a lesson of renunciation that this poem does not fully represent him. There are lessons of confidence in humankind, of resolution, of trust in reason, of " joy in widest commonalty spread "; and these also are religious. His poetry imparts strength for combat as well as comfort to the defeated. It is loved by children, and childhood abhors the religion of despair.

If any reader of this biography be impatient at so close an attention to the meaning of one poem, ample justification may be advanced in Wordsworth's own words. " I have not," he declared to Sir George Beaumont, " written down to the level of superficial observers and unthinking minds. Every great poet is a teacher: I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing."

Apart from " The White Doe of Rylstone," " Laodamia," a number of important prose works, and about thirty political sonnets, Wordsworth produced little in the eight years immediately following 1807 besides finishing " The Excursion." The list is not short, after all, though by no means comparable with what he had achieved in the preceding eight years, or, indeed, in the eight that followed his graduation from Cambridge. Before considering the great prose treatises of this period

and " The Excursion," we must review the domestic and personal events which it included.

As we have already seen, Wordsworth, his wife and two children, his sister, and Sara Hutchinson, were living in the farmhouse at Coleorton, Sir George Beaumont's estate in Leicestershire, at the end of 1806. There they were joined by Coleridge and his son Hartley, a lively boy eleven years old. Coleridge had resolved to live apart from his wife, but still shrank from making the separation public, and hence final. For thus hesitating he was greatly blamed by the Wordsworths, who realized that he was only prolonging a useless struggle which would ruin his own life and bring no real good to Mrs. Coleridge and the children. He remained at Coleorton from December 21, 1806, till some time after the middle of February, when he and Hartley went to London to visit Basil Montagu. In the absence of the Beaumonts, Wordsworth superintended the laying-out of their grounds, which proved to be a very congenial task. He had considerable executive ability, which he was glad to exercise, and at this time of life felt the need of interrupting frequently the strain of composition. In the spring of 1807 he and Mrs. Wordsworth went to London, where they spent five or six weeks, together with Coleridge and Hartley, at Basil Montagu's house. They probably stayed for a time, also, at their brother's, the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth, in Lambeth. The two-volume edition of poems was going through the press, and was published in May. Wordsworth was back at Coleorton on the 21st of that month. It is stated in the " Memoirs " that he was accompanied by Sir Walter Scott on his return. Scott was in London at the same time as Wordsworth, and going nightly into society; but of his travelling northward with Wordsworth there is no mention in Lockhart's " Life."

The domestic life of the Wordsworth family was becoming rather complicated. Sara Hutchinson lived with them. There were the three children—John, born June 18, 1803; Dorothy, born August 16, 1804; and Thomas, born June 16, 1806. Coleridge and his children

were always welcome. Visitors to the Lakes were beginning to seek the Wordsworths out. In a letter to Lady Beaumont, Dorothy says of her brother: " I cannot but admire the fortitude, and wonder at the success, with which he has laboured, in that one room, common to all the family, to all visitors, and where the children frequently play beside him." It was indeed admirable, and how different from the conditions under which he had been accustomed to work ! What a change from the quiet and freedom of the old days before his marriage !

It is not from any letters of theirs, but from expressions to which Coleridge gave way in seasons of anguish much later, that we learn one of the most affecting secrets of all their lives—namely, that he was attached to the Wordsworth household by love for Sara Hutchinson even more than by love for William and Dorothy.

In November a new acquaintance had been added to the Grasmere circle. This was Thomas De Quincey, then twenty-two years old. Having read the " Lyrical Ballads " upon their first appearance, this, he declared, was the greatest event in the unfolding of his own mind. He found in them " an absolute revelation of untrodden worlds, teeming with power and beauty, as yet unsuspected amongst men." So deep did they sink into his over-sensitive soul that for several years he could not bring himself to inquire the names of their authors from persons who might easily have told him. He dreaded any contamination of the sacred subject by mere casual or unsympathetic remarks. At length, on May 31, 1803, having learned Wordsworth's name and address, he wrote him an appreciative letter, which drew from the poet a kind reply on July 29, with an invitation to visit Grasmere. This answer seems not to have reached the ardent young admirer until many months later, when the correspondence was reopened. Wordsworth made an appointment to receive him in London in April, 1807, but the plan failed. In his wonderful but extremely diffuse and ecstatic chapter on Wordsworth, in " Literary Reminiscences," De Quincey tells that he " twice under-

took a long journey for the express purpose of paying his respects," " twice advanced as far as the Lake of Coniston, which is about eight miles from the Church of Grasmere," but, he says, " catching one hasty glimpse of this loveliest of landscapes, I retreated like a guilty thing, for fear I might be surprised by Wordsworth, and then returned faint-heartedly to Coniston, and so to Oxford, *re infectâ*. This was in 1806. And thus far, from mere excess of nervous distrust in my own powers for sustaining a conversation with Wordsworth, I had, for nearly five years, shrunk from a meeting for which, beyond all things under heaven, I longed." Who has not had an experience which, though perhaps with a less notable object, resembled De Quincey's ? At length the way was opened by the ever-helpful Thomas Poole, who enters from time to time in the story of these lives like Apollo on the ringing plains of Troy, giving help in time of need. In the summer of 1807 De Quincey appeared at Nether Stowey with a letter of introduction to Poole from Cottle. His purpose was to see Coleridge, who had recently been staying there. He found Poole himself worth seeing, and they went together over the grounds of Alfoxden talking of Wordsworth. Coleridge he discovered in the neighbouring town of Bridgwater, standing under a gateway and gazing about him. De Quincey's picture of this scene is immortal:

" In height he might seem to be about five feet eight: (he was, in reality, about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height;) his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically call fair because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large and soft in their expression; and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess, which mixed with their light, that I recognized my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more; and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street."

Towards the end of October, Mrs. Coleridge and her children, who were at Bristol, desiring to return to

Keswick, De Quincey offered to share with her the expense of a post-chaise and to accompany them to the north. He has given a vivid account of his sensations when they were descending the hill from the summit of White Moss, and came all at once, " at an abrupt turn of the road, in sight of a white cottage, with two solemn yew-trees breaking the glare of its white walls." With an extremity of language which appears less violent in its context than in a quotation, he says: " Never before or since can I reproach myself with having trembled at the approaching presence of any creature that is born of woman, excepting only, for once or twice in my life, woman herself." Wordsworth came out to greet Mrs. Coleridge.

" I therefore," continues De Quincey, " stunned almost with the actual catastrophe so long anticipated and so long postponed, mechanically went forward into the house. A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen feet long, and twelve broad; very prettily wainscotted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was—a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered at almost every season of the year, with roses; and, in the summer and autumn, with a profusion of jessamine and other fragrant shrubs. From the exuberant luxuriance of the vegetation around it, and from the dark hue of the wainscotting, this window, though tolerably large, did not furnish a very powerful light to one who entered from the open air. However, I saw sufficiently to be aware of two ladies just entering the room from a doorway opening upon a little staircase. The foremost, a tall young woman, with the most winning expression of benignity upon her features that I had ever beheld, made a slight curtsey, and advanced to me with so frank an air that all embarrassment must have fled in a moment, before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs. Wordsworth."

She was fair, " of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire."

"Her words were few. In reality, she talked so little that Mr. Slave-Trade Clarkson used to say of her that she could only say 'God bless you!' Certainly her intellect was not of an active order, but, in a quiescent, reposing, meditative way, she appeared always to have a genial enjoyment from her own thoughts."

De Quincey maintains stoutly that the poem, "She was a Phantom of delight," was really written about her. After further details of a most ecstatic description, he continues:

"Immediately behind her moved a lady, much shorter, much slighter, and perhaps, in all other respects, as different from her in personal characteristics as could be wished, for the most effective contrast. 'Her face was of Egyptian brown'; rarely, in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determinate gipsy tan. Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition, (for she had rejected all offers of marriage, out of pure sisterly regard to her brother and his children,) gave to her whole demeanour and to her conversation an air of embarrassment and even of self-conflict that was sometimes distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often, or rather generally, suffered in point of clearness and steadiness, from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility, and, perhaps, from some morbid irritability of the nerves. . . . She did not cultivate the graces which preside over the person and its carriage. But, on the other hand, she was a person of very remarkable endowments intellectually. . . . The pulses of light are not more quick or more inevitable in their flow and undulation, than were the answering and echoing movements of her sympathizing attention. Her knowledge of literature was irregular, and not systematically built up. She was content to be ignorant of many things; but what she knew and had really mastered lay where it could not be disturbed—in the temple of her own most fervid heart."

In so far as these portraits are the result of De Quincey's direct impressions at the moment of his first introduction to the Wordsworth family, they have very great value; but the reader will have noticed that they are in part made up of secondary opinions formed in later years. His description of Wordsworth himself is far too thin-spun to be quoted here entirely, but the main features are as follows: He was about five feet ten inches tall. His head was more impressive than even Charles Lamb's. Upon the whole, his figure was not good; his legs were "not ornamental"—whatever that may mean; his shoulders were too narrow and drooping, and "his walk had a wry and twisted appearance." He had a fine, sombre complexion, "resembling that of a Venetian senator or a Spanish monk." His face, says the describer, "was certainly the noblest for intellectual effects that, in actual life, I have seen, or at least have consciously been led to notice." He mentions its amazing likeness to a portrait of Milton in Richardson the painter's volume of notes on "Paradise Lost." It was a long face, the brow not remarkable for height, but rather, perhaps, for breadth, the nose large and a little arched, the mouth strong, the parts about the mouth noticeably prominent, the eyes remarkable, not for size, but capable of assuming, after a long day's toil in walking, a solemn and spiritual expression. He adds that both Wordsworth and his sister aged rapidly, one cause of this being "the secret fire of a temperament too fervid. Strangers invariably supposed them fifteen to twenty years older than they were."*

Near the close of 1807 Wordsworth rented a house, known as Allan Bank, which, though it would not be finished and ready for occupancy till six months later, had the advantage of being no farther from the centre of Grasmere village than Dove Cottage itself, and was large enough to hold his family and guests. Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson that they had engaged it with the idea that Coleridge and his two boys would come and live with them, although they were well aware of

* De Quincey, "Literary Reminiscences."

the odium they would draw upon themselves by having the children under their roof. She feared lest his irresolution would wreck the plan. Their experience with him at Coleorton had convinced her that it was not in their power to make him happy. As long as Mrs. Coleridge was not separated from him publicly he would continue to vacillate, and the peace of both households would be continually disturbed. It seems to have been expected also that the Clarksons should live with them for some time, and the uncertainty about Coleridge complicated that matter, too, though Dorothy writes: "If Coleridge makes our house only an *occasional* residence, there is no objection whatever on our side." In this same letter, which bears the date December 28, Dorothy for the first time mentions Henry Crabb Robinson, who was to become an intimate friend of herself and her brother. He was an old friend of Mrs. Clarkson, who, as Catherine Buck, had known him when he was a boy at Bury St. Edmunds.* She it was who helped to form the mind and heart of this generous disciple of great men. Because of her recommendation, he had, at the age of twenty, read Godwin's "Political Justice," which, he says, gave a turn to his mind, and in effect directed the whole course of his life. The reference in Dorothy Wordsworth's letter is as follows: "You will not accuse me of being selfish or vain, when I say that I should feel disposed to like your cousin Henry Robinson for his love of William's poems, if I had not before been prepossessed in his favour from your having spent so many happy hours of your youth in his society. I am not more confident of any truth than of this, that there

* H. C. Robinson's Diary, Sadler's 3-vol. edition, I. 30. Henry Crabb Robinson was born at Bury St. Edmunds in 1775, studied in Germany, and served for some years as a foreign correspondent and editor of *The Times*. He was a Unitarian, and upheld the principles of the Revolution, though bitterly opposing the Napoleonic régime. In 1809 he began the study of law at the Middle Temple, but his chief interests were politics, literature, and the personalities of living authors. He had a remarkable gift for making the acquaintance of celebrated men, of whom he knew, among others, Goethe, and many other leaders of thought in Germany, His admiration for Wordsworth was deep and lasting. His Diary furnishes many valuable details of the poet's later life.

must be something good in the heart that is much attached to my brother's poems."

Coleridge was in London giving a course of lectures at the Royal Institution, and writing for the daily Press. In a letter dated February 5, 1808, to Mrs. Clarkson at Bury St. Edmunds, Dorothy shows that she knew of his habit of taking opium:

"I am afraid you have not seen Coleridge. Poor Coleridge! the only good news we have heard of him is that his lectures are begun. We never hear anything but indirectly, and nothing has reached us but one detail of distressing illness after another; and I fear it will never be otherwise; for, setting aside that he takes no care to guard against wet or cold, I have no doubt that he continues the practice of taking opiates as much as ever. I wish you may have seen him. You will at least be able to tell us if he was in tolerable spirits. We are all well but Mary, who is as thin as ever I saw anybody who could go through the ordinary business of life and walk about cheerfully. William has finished his poem of The White Doe of Rylston, or the Fate of the Nortons, and it will probably be sent to the press in less than a month. The length of the poem is nearly 1,700 lines, and I think it very beautiful. It is to be published in Quarto. He means to demand 100 guineas for 1,000 copies. Before he publishes it he intends to send the manuscript to Coleridge."

A little later in February came the news that he had broken down, and on the 23rd Wordsworth hastened to his side. In about a month he was reported to be much better. "He has been too much employed," wrote Dorothy to Mrs. Clarkson, "in thinking of his friends to have time to brood over his own misfortunes, and *that* I am sure is much better for him; though I believe he has a thousand times over more care and sorrow for his friends than for himself. He has been exceedingly anxious about dear Sara H. I trust more so than there was occasion; for she is at present very well."

It was in this month that the sad death of a poor farmer and his wife in Easedale, George and Sarah Green, who were lost on the fells in a snowstorm,

left their large family of children to the charity of the neighbours. The Wordsworths, besides undertaking to provide for the second daughter, were active in raising money to support the others. The poet himself returned to Grasmere on April 6, his journey having been hastened by bad accounts of Sara Hutchinson's health. He had stayed part of the time at Dunmow with Lady Beaumont's mother, had heard Coleridge lecture twice, and mingled somewhat with other literary persons.

Crabb Robinson met him at Charles Lamb's at breakfast on March 15, and went with him to call on Mrs. Clarkson, who was visiting friends not far away. He says: "Wordsworth, in my first *tête-à-tête* with him, spoke freely and praisingly of his own poems, which I never felt to be unbecoming, but the contrary." Unfortunately, this grew into a habit with Wordsworth, and was felt to be unbecoming by many of his acquaintances. It was due in part to a disinterested attachment to the principles which his poems illustrate, and in part also to the ignorant criticism of reviewers, whom he had few opportunities to answer. But there is no denying that he showed a want of tact and a certain grand style of egoism. The fault cannot be excused on the ground of the loneliness of his life, for it cannot be said that he had ever, for any great length of time, been cut off from social intercourse with keen minds; he had known many able and witty persons. But hitherto he had seldom mingled with large groups, in which idiosyncrasies were reduced to a conventional level. He therefore talked in London just as he would have done to a single listener on Helvellyn.

One of the few letters from Wordsworth to Coleridge that have been published is one dated at Grasmere, April 19, 1808, from which we learn of a second visit to the Lambs. "I now come to the White Doe," he writes. "In compliance with frequent entreaties I took the MS. to the Lambs, to read it, or part of it, one evening. There unluckily I found Hazlitt and his beloved [Sarah Stoddart, a great friend of Mary Lamb]: of course, though I had the poem in my hand, I declined,

nay absolutely refused, to read it; but, as they were very earnest in entreating me, I at last consented to read one book." He then gives Coleridge an exposition of the poem, and signs himself, with an expansiveness rare indeed in him, and which shows how much he loved his friend, " Most tenderly yours."

We catch glimpses of Wordsworth in faithful attendance on Coleridge. Lamb, in his note of invitation to Robinson, says: " I am afraid W. is so engaged with Coleridge, who is ill, we cannot have him in an evening." And Wordsworth left Coleridge's room in the *Courier* building in the Strand at seven in the morning on the day he left London to travel homeward. Much of his time this spring was spent in writing to his rich friends in behalf of the orphan children of George and Sarah Green. We learn incidentally from one of these letters—to Wrangham—that this old friend had offered to build him a cottage, and that the offer was declined.

In one of the last letters he wrote from the cottage that had sheltered him through the most productive years of his life—to Wrangham, June 5, 1808—Wordsworth discusses the kind of reading suited to uneducated people. He realized the immense importance of this subject, agreeing with Wrangham that books for the poor should be chiefly religious, but holding also that, since " piety and religion will be best understood by him who takes the most comprehensive view of the human mind," there should be a liberal allowance of other kinds. " I have many a time wished," he says, " that I had talents to produce songs, poems, and little histories, that might circulate among other good things in this way, supplanting partly the bad; flowers and useful herbs to take the place of weeds. Indeed, some of the poems which I have published were composed not without a hope that at some time or other they might answer this purpose." This desire has been in large measure fulfilled by a host of writers, and is likely to be fulfilled more and more. It reminds one of the finest and dearest ambition of Tolstoi.

In June, 1808, the Wordsworths removed to Allan Bank, half a mile away, on the other side of the vale. The house was unfinished, and workmen were still in it. Here began a far less harmonious and happy period than that which had been spent at Town-end. The building was ill constructed; it was exposed to the winds that sweep down Easedale, and the chimneys smoked abominably. Abundance of room rendered it possible to invite De Quincey, the Clarksons, and Coleridge and his children, to stay with them; and the consequences of this overindulgence in hospitality were unfavourable to work. A fourth child, Catherine, was born September 6, 1808.

Wordsworth had plucked Coleridge from the pit of horror by his presence and moral persuasion, saving his life, perhaps, and at least enabling him to fulfil his London engagements. Now he took him in, apparently with the intention of keeping him as long as he would stay. This was in September. De Quincey was at Allan Bank at the same time, torn between native delicacy on the one hand and a restless desire to satisfy his curiosity on the other. He had the instinct of a detective. The ink was never dry on his pen. He realized that posterity would treasure up every detail he might report. And no detail seemed insignificant to him, for he worshipped literary greatness. Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Marshall, December 4, 1808, from Allan Bank, telling her the house was " literally not habitable." The following passage of this letter contains much in little:

" At the time of the great storm, Mrs. Coleridge and her little girl were here, and Mr. Coleridge is with us constantly; so you will make out that we are a pretty large family to provide for in such a manner. Mr. Coleridge and his wife are separated; and I hope they will both be the happier for it. They are upon friendly terms, and occasionally see each other. In fact, Mrs. Coleridge was more than a week at Grasmere under the same roof with him. Coleridge intends to spend the winter with us. On this side of the paper you will find a prospectus of a work which he is going to undertake; and I have little doubt but that it will be well executed

if his health does not fail him; but on that score (though he is well at present) I have many fears. My brother is deeply engaged writing a pamphlet upon the Convention of Cintra, an event which has interested him more than words can express. His first and his last thoughts are of Spain and Portugal."

To Wordsworth's pamphlet we shall turn our attention presently. Coleridge's undertaking was his periodical, *The Friend*, a venture upon which he had embarked against the advice of his well-wishers, although Wordsworth, for one, while expecting failure, was unwilling to damp his ardour. I should think that, if Coleridge had found a good business manager, nothing would have been more suitable to the peculiarities of his genius than the opportunity for varied self-expression enjoyed by the owner and editor of a magazine. But he was unwise in his business arrangements. London or Edinburgh, or Oxford or Cambridge, might have been a good place for his undertaking; Penrith certainly was not, and at Penrith *The Friend* was to be printed. It is fair to say that difficulties of publication and distribution had more to do with its failure than any other cause. Its existence, though brief, was glorious. It was a brave effort on Coleridge's part to play the man; it drew from Poole and Montagu and Clarkson, and Stuart, the London journalist, and no one knows how many others, that kind of help which blesses those who give; it enlisted Wordsworth's anxious interest, and was kept going, towards the end, in large part by his contributions. Sara Hutchinson must not be forgotten; she transcribed almost every paper for the press. The first number was to have appeared January 7, 1809; it came out on June 1. The second number followed punctually on June 8, but No. 3 was seven weeks late. With many irregularities and changes of plan, the numbers continued fitfully to appear, until with No. 27, the last, on March 15, 1810, *The Friend* expired.

All this time Coleridge made his home with the Wordsworths, though often hovering between Allan Bank and Greta Hall or Penrith. His boys, Hartley and Derwent,

were in school at Ambleside, but appear to have spent their vacations and Sundays at Allan Bank. Including two maids and a little girl—probably Sally Green—there were regularly thirteen in the Wordsworth household, and on Saturdays and Sundays fifteen. They kept a cow and pigs, baked all their bread at home, washed part of their clothes, and mangled and ironed the whole. These details we learn from a letter of Dorothy's to Mrs. Clarkson, December 8, 1808, in which, after mentioning such matters almost casually, she goes on to tell of deeper troubles:

"Dear Coleridge is well and in good spirits, writing letters to all his friends and acquaintances, despatching prospectuses, and fully prepared to begin his work. Nobody, surely, but himself would have ventured to send forth this prospectus with not one essay written, no beginning made! but yet I believe it was the only way for him. I believe he could not have made the beginning unspurred by a necessity which is now created by the promises therein made. I cannot, however, be without hauntings of fear, seeing him so often obliged to lie in bed more than half of the day—often so very poorly as to be utterly unable to do anything whatever. To-day, though he came down to dinner at three perfectly well, he did not rise till near two o'clock. . . . Sara and he are sitting together in his parlour. William and Mary (alas! all involved in smoke) in William's study, where she is writing for him (he dictating)."

The Wordsworths took a six years' lease of their old cottage, and let it, partly furnished, to De Quincey, who by this time had become devoted to them all, and especially to the children. He went to London in the spring of 1809, and while there attended to the printing of Wordsworth's great political pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra. He returned in October, but spent several weeks at Allan Bank before taking up his residence at Dove Cottage. John Wilson (Christopher North) was by this time settled near the banks of Windermere, having been attracted to the Lakes by the presence of Wordsworth there. Little Dora was at school this spring at Appleby, where her father visited

her. It is worthy of remark that up to this time there had been, since boyhood, hardly any intercourse between William Wordsworth and his brother Christopher; Dorothy seldom mentions him. He was, however, becoming prominent in academic and ecclesiastical circles.

Sara Hutchinson, worn out with the nervous strain of compelling Coleridge to go on with his work, and agitated beyond endurance, left Allan Bank in the spring of 1810 to visit her brother, who was now farming in Wales. With her departure the combined moral force of the rest of the family was insufficient to uphold the enslaved man; he sank into abysmal despair, silent, unconscious of the beautiful world about him, coming out of his room only at meal-time, and then creeping back to his solitude. "His whole time and thoughts," wrote poor Dorothy, "except when he is reading (and he reads a great deal), are employed in deceiving himself and seeking to deceive others."

Is it any wonder that, apart from revising "The White Doe of Rylstone" and continuing "The Excursion," Wordsworth wrote so little poetry in all this time? Mrs. Wordsworth bore a third son, and fifth child, William, May 12, 1810. In the autumn of that year Dorothy Wordsworth visited her uncle, Canon Cookson, at Binfield, near Windsor, and saw something of the Lambs. Charles took her to see the sights of London, but an intended stay with him and his sister was put off because Mary had one of her attacks of illness. She returned to Grasmere before the middle of November. Coleridge, too, had gone to London in October. His departure, and the tragic estrangement from his old friends which then began, wrought so deep a change in Wordsworth's life that we must reserve the topic for a later page, going back now to mention the prose works into which the latter had been pouring his energy during the last three years.

Towards the end of May, 1809, Wordsworth published in London a long pamphlet or tractate. Its title is an explanation of its contents, and reads as follows: "Con-

cerning the relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, to each other, and to the common enemy, at this crisis; and specifically as affected by the Convention of Cintra; the whole brought to the test of those principles by which alone the independence and freedom of nations can be preserved or recovered." Although portions of it had been already printed in a newspaper, his intention from the beginning was to bring it out as a unit, and, notwithstanding his hope that it might influence contemporary politics, he designed it for all time. Two issues of the London *Courier*—in December, 1808, and January, 1809—contained the only parts which were printed in time to have any effect upon the question at issue. The plan of continuing the work in this way was frustrated by the remoteness of Grasmere. Documents arrived there late, and business arrangements were hard to make at such a distance. De Quincey, who was in London, kindly undertook to attend to the proof-reading. But he had a peculiar and absurd system of punctuation, which annoyed the printers and caused delay; so that when the pamphlet appeared the crisis which occasioned it was past. But the principles involved are more lasting. The work is important as a definite exposition of Wordsworth's political philosophy sixteen years after his Letter to Bishop Watson, and as the last great example of a Miltonic tract.

The conquests of Napoleon in Germany, the Low Countries, and Italy, had been made against governments. His projects in the Iberian peninsula were resisted by the Spanish and Portuguese peoples. It was plain in this case that he was the enemy of liberty. When the British cabinet sent an army, under Sir Arthur Wellesley, to oppose the French in Portugal, the most ardent advocates of democratic and anti-military principles in England were, with few exceptions, as enthusiastic as any others in support of the movement. In August, 1808, Wellesley defeated Junot at Vimiero, but was immediately superseded by Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard, who signed a convention or military treaty at Cintra, according to which the French

army was allowed to return to France with its arms and booty. They had lost a great chance to free both Portugal and Spain and to cripple Napoleon. The news was received in England with indignation, but the government stupidly endeavoured to stifle the voice of the people. Wordsworth believed he was running some risk in denouncing the actions of generals and cabinet ministers. Men had been thrown into prison and heavily fined for milder language than he used. But it is doubtful whether any of his remarks were really libellous. Bitter as was his disapproval of what had happened, he kept the controversy, as far as possible, on a high level. He had possessed himself of all the facts he could collect, and entered into the closest details, showing remarkable knowledge and forensic power; yet his constant effort was to apply principles of eternal verity.

His style is as heroic as his theme. It has a volume and weight unequalled even by Burke, and matched only by Milton. Every sentence is like a gun of huge calibre. The detonation stuns and bewilders. One loses sight of the object in the smoke that follows each discharge. For immediate effect this artillery is far too great, and it is no wonder that a small edition of 500 copies failed to sell. But a reader who has intellect enough to understand these tremendous volleys and candour enough to admit his own deficiency will be slow to hold Wordsworth responsible for the failure. If we had heroic minds, this would be the language in which to address them. A student of rhetoric or of logic will find here a noble example, in the grand style, of both arts. They have been used in this pamphlet as the instruments of a passion that without them would have destroyed the mind in which it raged.

The toil Wordsworth bestowed on his treatise exhausted and broke him. So anxious was he about public affairs that during the expedition to Portugal he often walked in the dead of night to the top of Dunmail Raise to anticipate the post and get the newspapers. His letters that autumn and winter are full of the subject. He shared the feeling of panic which again

and again swept, and still sometimes sweeps, through the English people. His meditative and secluded life made him peculiarly susceptible to this infection.

Wordsworth wrote several numbers of *The Friend*, two of them being replies to an open letter, which filled the seventeenth issue, from his disciple John Wilson (Christopher North), who signed himself "Mathetes." The subject of these articles is the sacredness of childhood, the vitalizing power of nature, the authority of reason, and the value of joy as an index of moral health —in fact, the central doctrines of Wordsworth's philosophy, or Rousseau plus Godwin plus Wordsworth. Evidently Wordsworth, even as late as 1809, had not entirely abandoned the principles of the Enlightenment, and in so far as he had done so, it was not on grounds of abstract preference, but because he was driven by the seeming logic of events and the force of vulgar opinion. The reaction was political rather than spiritual, physical rather than intellectual. A favourable turn in public events—for instance, the death of Napoleon and the return to power of a sane democracy in France—would at this point have saved him from the abyss of despondency and distrust into which he was falling.

The twenty-fifth number of *The Friend*, appearing February 22, 1810, contained a long essay by Wordsworth, "Upon Epitaphs," and when the periodical came to an untimely end he had in manuscript two other dissertations upon the same rather appropriate subject.

Late in the autumn of 1809 Wordsworth wrote an anonymous introduction to a volume of drawings entitled "Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire," by the Rev. Joseph Wilkinson. The book was published early the next year. This introduction he reprinted, with some alterations, in 1820, with his sonnets on the River Duddon and other poems, and independently in 1822 as "A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England." This he called the third edition of the treatise. It contained much additional matter. In 1823 a fourth and revised edition appeared, and in 1835 a fifth, with further fresh

matter. This, the final text, was entitled "A Guide through the District of the Lakes in the North of England, with a Description of the Scenery, etc., for the Use of Tourists and Residents." Wordsworth's book is, as might have been expected, much more than a guide. It is an application of his moral philosophy, and of the principles of æsthetics deducible from them, to a particular object. This object, while unusually well defined by geographical boundaries, is in itself very complex, like almost everything else in nature. The treatment is admirably systematic and rational. The author proves himself to be not only an authority on topography, architecture, landscape gardening, and geology, but furnishes a model of analytical procedure in any field of research.

CHAPTER XXI

LOSSES AND FEARS

We have seen that by the autumn of 1810 Coleridge had sickened of *The Friend*, and was living at Allan Bank as an invalid and dependent. His friends nursed him, humoured him, tried to animate his flagging will. Their patience was inexhaustible, their love unfailing. They knew that, however great their own inconvenience was, it could not be compared with his remorse. He was racked with physical pain, which opium could no longer dull, and plunged in mental torpors which alcohol could no longer dispel. In a busy household including several young children, his irregular and selfish habits must have been little less than intolerable. Yet they were tolerated to the end. But late in October Basil Montagu, with Mrs. Montagu and their daughter, passed through Grasmere on their way from Scotland to London, and Coleridge made arrangements to travel with them. Montagu was an impulsive man, with plenty of means. He invited his old friend to live with him in his town-house, and Coleridge, fired with fresh hope and ambition, gladly accepted. Wordsworth, thinking it unfair not to warn Montagu, told him plainly that Coleridge's habits would make him a troublesome guest. This was done in Coleridge's interest as well as Montagu's. A quarrel with Montagu, which was sure to occur if they tried to live together, would have deprived Coleridge of one of his most useful friends. Apparently the advice was disregarded at first, and only acted upon when it was seen to be well founded; for it was at Montagu's house, a few days after their arrival, that poor Coleridge was blunderingly told that Wordsworth had predicted a failure of the plan. Montagu, who was not a prudent and exact talker, spoke in a moment of exasperation.

He probably exaggerated what Wordsworth had said, and in such a case the manner is quite as important as the matter. One can imagine the painful effort Wordsworth must have made to express his scruples, and how delicately worded they must have been. As they came to Coleridge's ears they were harsh and unfriendly. He conceived the monstrous idea that Wordsworth had commissioned Montagu to tell him that he had been an absolute nuisance in the former's family, and that he, Wordsworth, had lost all hope of him. Our information of what Coleridge thought he heard and how he felt is derived chiefly from his heart-breaking letters written eighteen months later, when reconciliation was in progress. Although he professed that he never liked or respected Montagu, and had no intention of staying in his house, yet he believed his report, adding interpretations which became part of the text, and telling Mary Lamb, with a flood of tears, that Wordsworth had given him up. He was at this juncture taken in by his kind friends, the Morgans, under whose roof a new chapter in his life began. And that old chapter, of a noble friendship, of a community of genius, of generous admiration, of faithful sacrifice, could never be opened again.

Coleridge suffered acutely, the more so as, through his own indiscretion, the story got abroad, to the discredit of all concerned. Wordsworth, for some time ignorant of what had happened, could only wonder why Coleridge never wrote. News came at last through Mrs. Coleridge. The whole circle, from Southey at Keswick to kind Thomas Poole at Nether Stowey, were rendered miserable. The Lambs, hearing only one side, were partially estranged from the Wordsworths. Coleridge's sons, Hartley and Derwent, who had seen their father happy, for him, at Grasmere, grieved at the change which they could not understand. "It would pity anybody's heart," wrote Dorothy to Mrs. Clarkson, "to look at Hartley, when he inquires (as if hopelessly) if there has been any news of his father."

In the spring of 1811 the Wordsworths moved into the Rectory, opposite the church in Grasmere village,

and the Coleridge boys continued spending two days a week with them as before. It is pathetic to observe that William and Dorothy read *The Courier* newspaper, picking out articles and poems which they recognized as having been written by their old friend. How far he had fallen in their respect is shown by the following passage in Dorothy's letter to Mrs. Clarkson, just quoted:

" I am sorry to say (I would not say it but to you) that poor Coleridge's late writings in *The Courier* have in general evinced the same sad weakness of moral constitution to which you alluded in your last letter, as tainting his intercourse with his private friends, and his casual acquaintances also. They are as much the work of a party-spirit as if he were writing for a place—servile adulations of the Wellesleys."

The picture that Henry Crabb Robinson, in his Diary, paints of Coleridge in London is not at all melancholy. Robinson saw him for the first time in private, at Charles Lamb's on November 14, 1810. The pleasure was repeated the next evening. Coleridge was very " eloquent," and spoke of Wordsworth " with great warmth of praise, but objected to some of his poems." " Wishing to avoid an undue regard to the high and genteel in society, Wordsworth had unreasonably attached himself to the low, so that he himself erred at last." It is strange that Coleridge could talk so freely about Wordsworth if the mere thought of him occasioned anguish.

There is nothing in Wordsworth's correspondence to indicate that he was aware of the presence of Percy Bysshe Shelley, at Keswick. Yet for three months,—November, 1811, to February, 1812—the shores of Derwent Water resounded to the high voice of the poet who next to Wordsworth himself justifies Keats's line, " Great spirits now on earth are sojourning." After his expulsion from Oxford, his flight with Harriet Westbrook, and their marriage in Edinburgh, it was at Keswick that the young poet found one of those " green isles " of happiness which he afterwards recalled in the " Lines written among the Euganean Hills." With the young couple came Harriet's sister, Eliza. They rented a

cottage, and made considerable stir in the village. The Duke of Norfolk entertained the Shelleys and Miss Westbrook for a week at Greystoke, and there, early in December, Wordsworth's old friend, William Calvert, was smitten with admiration for the wonderful youth. A little later, at Calvert's house, Southey, too, made his acquaintance, and promptly gave him neighbourly aid, besides undertaking to convert him from "atheism" by lending him Bishop Berkeley's works, and venturing to argue with him in metaphysics. It is very unlikely that some news of this glorious stranger did not reach Grasmere, but we may be sure that it would not be of a nature to attract Wordsworth. To one who had not met Shelley, he would be only an eccentric rich young man who had been expelled from the university for defending atheism, and had committed the folly of eloping with an innkeeper's daughter.

There is in the British Museum a manuscript letter from Shelley to Miss Hitchener, dated Keswick, January 2, 1811 [1812], in which he transcribes Wordsworth's "A Poet's Epitaph," and says: "I have transcribed a piece of Wordsworth's poetry. It may give you some idea of the man. How expressively keen are the first stanzas! I shall see this man soon." In the same letter he remarks: "Mrs. Coleridge is come. Mrs. Lovel, who was once an actress, is the best of them."

The year 1811 closed with Coleridge still unreconciled. I do not know that Wordsworth made any effort to get into communication with him. Dorothy was less obdurate, and perhaps she acted for her brother. Mrs. Coleridge, in a letter to Poole, October-November, 1812 (now in the British Museum), writes: "Numerous were the letters and messages I received from Miss W. to urge C. to write to her, and not leave the country without seeing them; but he would not go to them, and they did not come to him, so after staying 6 weeks he returned to give his lectures at Willis's rooms." One loving word would probably have blown away all the accursed darkness that lay between them. In a letter to Beaumont, dated November 16, 1811, Wordsworth writes: "Cole-

ridge is about to deliver a course of lectures upon Poetry at some Institution in the City. He is well, and I learn that *The Friend* has been a good deal inquired after lately. For ourselves, we never hear from him." We may well believe what Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson a few weeks later: " William bears all with calm dignity, neither justifying himself nor complaining of C." But how we wish he could have laid his dignity aside! Forgiveness and reconciliation never amount to much unless they are complete. Perhaps in this the fallen excel the upright. How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! Only after a regrettable lapse of time, and in a rather stern spirit, did Wordsworth take the step which it was his duty to take, as the stronger and happier man. It was a mailed hand that bore the olive-branch.

We find Wordsworth on May 6, 1812, writing to Mrs Clarkson from Sir George Beaumont's town-house, in Grosvenor Square, London, whither he has come " with a determination to confront Coleridge and Montagu upon this vile business." His tone is self-righteous; his language not very tender. Nevertheless, in the course of a month he had accomplished his purpose to some extent, for on June 4 he wrote to Mrs. Clarkson, from the same house, that he had seen Coleridge several times, and had a pleasant walk with him to Hampstead. Yet there remained, as Coleridge sadly complained, " an immedicable *But*," and he wrote to Poole in 1813, referring to the " year-long difference " between Wordsworth and himself, compared with the sufferings of which, he said, " all former afflictions of my life were less than flea-bites." On the day of the walk to Hampstead, Wordsworth's little daughter Catherine died, at Grasmere, her ailment, as one reads the symptoms, being perhaps what is now termed infantile paralysis. De Quincey loved this child with touching devotion, and, writing to him of the sad event, Dorothy Wordsworth says: " It is a great addition to our affliction that her father and mother were not here to see her in the last happy weeks of her short life."

It is evident from Coleridge's letters at this time that he valued Montagu's opinion very little, and Wordsworth's very much; that matters had not been helped by the intervention of Mary Lamb; that writing to Sara Hutchinson and Mrs. Clarkson was of no use; and that the one thing needed was a personal meeting between the two old friends, a walk to Hampstead or anywhere else together.

The reconciliation had been so far effected by May 29, 1812, that Wordsworth spent the evening of that day at the Morgans, with whom Coleridge was living. Crabb Robinson had several meetings with Wordsworth at this time and got him to talk about himself.

"He spoke," we are told on May 8, "of his own poems with a just feeling of confidence which a sense of his own excellence gives him. . . . The approbation he has met with from some superior persons compensates for the loss of popularity, though no man has completely understood him, not excepting Coleridge, who is not happy enough to enter into his feelings. 'I am myself,' said Wordsworth, 'one of the happiest of men; and no man who does not partake of that happiness, who lives a life of constant bustle, and whose felicity depends on the opinions of others, can possibly comprehend the best of my poems.'" On May 31 Robinson writes: "Found Wordsworth demonstrating to Hamond some of the points of his philosophical theory. Speaking of his own poems, he said he valued them principally as being a new power in the literary world. Hamond's friend Miller esteemed them for their pure morality. Wordsworth said he himself looked to the powers of mind they called forth, and the energies they presuppose and excite as the standard by which they should be tried. He expatiated also on his fears lest a social war should arise between the poor and the rich, the danger of which is aggravated by the vast extension of the manufacturing system. Wordsworth defended earnestly the Church Establishment. He even said he would shed his blood for it. Nor was he disconcerted by a laugh raised against him on account of his having before confessed that he knew not when he had been in a church in his own country. 'All our ministers are so vile,' said he. The mischief of allowing the clergy to depend upon the caprice of the multitude he thought more than outweighed all the evils of an Establishment."

Under date of May 24, 1812, Robinson makes this interesting entry in his Diary:

" Joined Wordsworth in Oxford Road; we then got into the fields and walked to Hampstead. I read to him a number of Blake's poems, with some of which he was pleased. He regarded Blake as having in him the elements of poetry much more than either Byron or Scott. We met Miss Joanna Baillie, and accompanied her home. She is small in figure, and her gait is mean and shuffling, but her manners are those of a well-bred woman. She has none of the unpleasant airs too common to literary ladies. . . . Wordsworth said of her with warmth, ' If I had to present anyone to a foreigner as a model of an English gentlewoman, it would be Joanna Baillie.' "

In a letter to his brother, dated May 25, 1812, Robinson mentions having been at an evening party, where he felt uncomfortable because democrats were present; not that he disliked democrats himself, but he feared lest someone might utter Jacobinical sentiments which would give offence to Wordsworth, who was in the company. This is one of many examples of Wordsworth's power to impose his will and even his prejudices on persons about him.

On December 1 Wordsworth's little son Thomas died of measles, and a few weeks later Dorothy wrote: " My brother looks ten years older since the death of Thomas." Coleridge made some awkward and unacceptable attempts at condolence. William and Dorothy both wrote to him that nothing would do them so much good as his company and conversation; yet for some reason he kept away.

Wordsworth has been solemnly arraigned for accepting private patronage and a public sinecure. It is true that throughout his life he was much indebted to wealthy admirers. He could not have supported his family on the proceeds of his literary labours without descending to a more popular style or choosing subjects of more ephemeral interest. This fact was to him sufficient justification for accepting and even soliciting aid.

We need not have recourse to the vulgar argument that he did only what many other poets have done. He himself was too reasonable and too original to have tolerated such a defence. With him the true ground of action was his proud consciousness that he was repaying to mankind a thousandfold what a few representatives of society bestowed upon him. It was, he thought, his just dues, not charity, he received. We may readily grant his contention, and wish he had been even more liberally rewarded. There is, however, one thing which must not be forgotten; it is almost beyond the power of human nature to accept favours without some degree of submission. An irresponsible person like Coleridge could go on his way unchanged. Wordsworth would be anchored by a gift.

Thus it is with a sense of apprehension that we find him on several occasions, in 1812, asking Lord Lonsdale to find for him a Government position which shall add to his income without requiring much of his time. He writes, on February 6:

"I long hoped, depending upon my moderate desires, that the profits of my literary labours, added to the little which I possessed, would have answered all the rational wants of myself and my family. But in this I have been disappointed, and for these causes: firstly, the unexpected pressure of the times, falling most heavily upon men who have no regular means of increasing their income in proportion; secondly, I had erroneously calculated upon the degree in which my writings were likely to suit the taste of the times; and, lastly, much the most important part of my efforts cannot meet the public eye for many years, from the comprehensiveness of the subject."

Through Lord Lonsdale's influence, he received from Government, on March 27, 1813, the office of distributor of stamps in the county of Westmorland. The money value of this position appears to have depended upon the number of stamps purchased; it was estimated at from £400 to £600 per annum. That the Government was paying more than the service was worth is shown by the fact that Wordsworth relinquished £100 per

annum to the previous incumbent Mr. Wilkin, and that most of the work was done by a clerk, Mr. John Carter, who naturally had to be paid something. Exactly how much remained cannot be known, but it was a substantial amount, and made an important difference in Wordsworth's income. It was enough to trouble his conscience, which he soothed by thinking of the responsibility incurred by keeping the stamps in his house.

The change in his circumstances was marked by his removal from Grasmere. The Rectory was associated with the sad events of the previous year. It was separated only by the village street from the churchyard where his little ones were buried. He could now afford to live in a more commodious house. Such a one was available, two miles south-east, above the road to Ambleside. It was known as Rydal Mount, and formed part of the great estate of Sir Michael Le Fleming. Rydal itself was not even a village. There was no church, and the house commanded an uninterrupted view of the woods, the lake, and the mountains beyond. There was a human loss in leaving Grasmere which was to make itself felt in all the poet's future thought and writing. The humble intimacies of village life had been of inestimable value to him. They had kept open to him one of the main sources of his poetic vigour, the feelings and conduct of poor working people.

Rydal Mount a hundred years ago was a plainer house than it is now, yet large and comfortable. The situation is exceedingly beautiful. Here Wordsworth lived contentedly for thirty-seven years, and here he died. The family removed to it early in the spring of 1813. There is little else to record for this year. The Coleridge boys continued making their week-end visits. Of their father Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson on April 8:

"God bless him! He little knows with what tenderness we have lately thought of him, nor how entirely we are softened to all sense of injury. We have had no thoughts of him but such as ought to have made him lean upon us with confidential love, and fear not to confess his weaknesses."

Wordsworth's political opinions had by this time taken their final bent. In a letter to Wrangham, dated August 28, 1813, he declared that he favoured "resistance of Bonaparte by force of arms," and "adherence to the British Constitution in withholding political power from the Roman Catholics," and therefore was, and had long been by principle, a supporter of the Ministry. That he was not a man to stop short of extremes when he had once taken his direction, the following extract from a letter to his patron, Lord Lonsdale, dated February 9, 1814, will show:

"Everyone knows of what importance the equestrian order was in preserving tranquillity and a balance and gradation of power in ancient Rome; the like may take place among ourselves through the medium of an armed yeomanry; and surely a preservative of this kind is largely called for by the tendencies of things at present. . . . If the whole island was covered with a force of this kind, the Press properly curbed, the Poor Laws gradually reformed, provision made for new Churches to keep pace with the population (an indispensable measure)—if these things were done and other improvements carried forward, as they have been, order may yet be preserved among us, and the people remain free and happy."

What a respectable old Tory he had become, with his fear of disorder and of a free Press, his dependence on the Church as an ally of the State, his disapproval of "the tendencies of things at present," his willingness to see an armed force cover the land for the sake of "a balance and gradation of power"! This is not the language of poetry, nor had it been the language of Wordsworth's youth; but there was as yet no warrant for assuming that, because he had grown prematurely old in his attitude towards some of the greatest subjects which engage the attention of mankind, he was therefore incapable of artistic efforts of a very high order.

It is true that "The Excursion," which he had completed by the summer of 1814, contained the last abundant product of his old methods of work. But at the very time when his faithful attendants were copying

that work for the press, he surprised his friends by writing what Charles Lamb called "A very original poem: I mean original with reference to your own manner." "Laodamia" is quite distinct from anything he had previously composed. It is his first poem founded solely on classic myth, and elaborated strictly in the classic manner. He was at this time preparing his eldest son for college, and renewing his own acquaintance with Virgil and Ovid. His attention was caught by a passage from Pliny's "Natural History," perhaps in some commentary on the sixth book of the "Æneid," in which it is narrated that the trees which grew above the tomb of Protesilaus shot upward till they saw Ilium on the opposite shore of the Hellespont, whereupon they withered and began once more their everlasting growth. Choosing a stately measure, he recast the story of the Greek hero who came from the under-world by permission of the gods to speak eternal truths to his dear wife, Laodamia. The English poet not only gave to some of Virgil's greatest lines a memorable form in our own language, but enriched the world with serious and beautiful thoughts in immortally fresh expression, as when, speaking of the eternal world, Protesilaus says:

> Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains;

and again:

> The Gods approve
> The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul.

The lofty spirit of these lines was destined to breathe anew in the poetry of Wordsworth's greatest disciple, Matthew Arnold. The full import of the old myth is nobly expressed in the following stanza, in which the hero rebukes Laodamia's pitifully human desire for earthly love:

> Learn, by immortal yearning, to ascend—
> Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
> Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
> For this the passion to excess was driven—
> That self might be annulled: her bondage prove
> The fetters of a dream, opposed to love.

Had he in mind his parting with Annette Vallon at Calais? Is this poem an attempt to justify to himself his action upon that occasion by asserting, in covert terms, that his character and destiny were too high to be linked with hers? It is, at all events, a perfect work of art in which nothing could conceivably be altered without loss. Wordsworth tells us in a Fenwick note that it cost him more trouble than almost anything of equal length he had ever written. He revised it anxiously for later editions, in accordance with his principle that "it is frequently true of second words, as of second thoughts, that they are the best."

When Wordsworth, at about the time he wrote "Laodamia," spoke of Milton as his great predecessor, he might well have felt that for versatility at least he was worthy to stand the comparison. The words occur in a letter to Poole, dated April 24, 1814, in which the poet urges his old friend to engage with him in a scheme for raising money to send Hartley Coleridge through college.

Wordsworth's third visit to Scotland was made in 1814. With Mrs. Wordsworth and her sister Sara Hutchinson, he left home July 18. They spent some time on the shores of Loch Lomond, and travelled at least as far north as Dunkeld, but appear to have remained longest in the delightful region south-east of Edinburgh. They formed an intimacy with Robert Pearce Gillies, at that time a man of considerable literary promise, living near Hawthornden. He was editor of *The Foreign Quarterly Review*, and had a wide circle of acquaintances among Scottish men of letters. At Traquair Wordsworth met Dr. Anderson, editor of "The British Poets," and here they were joined by Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, in whose company the party visited the Yarrow. But on the whole the harvest of personal friendships was not more abundant than that of poetical reminiscences, which was meagre. Five poems, of quite inferior value, were the result of this journey, which appears to have lasted well into the autumn.

The following extracts from letters written by Dorothy to Mrs. Clarkson, beginning in 1814, are evidence that

Wordsworth had dealt candidly with his wife and her family, and had by no means avoided all responsibility for his conduct in 1792:

[Postmarked 1814. Addressed to Mrs. Clarkson at Purfleet.]

"*Sunday night, 9th October.*

"I cannot help very much regretting that you forgot to tell me where to address you while you were there [in Paris], as I should have been exceedingly glad that you had seen the young woman whom I mentioned to you, the more so as a treaty of marriage is now on foot between her and the Brother of the officer Beaudouin whom I mentioned to you as having been at Rydale, and she and her Mother are extremely anxious that I should be present at the wedding, and for that purpose pressed me very much to go in October. This, unless such good fortune had attended us as being taken under your and your Husband's protection, we could not think of at this season, and therefore I wish that the marriage should be deferred till next spring or summer, because I desire exceedingly to see the poor Girl before she takes another protector than her mother, under whom I believe she has been bred up in perfect purity and innocence, and to whom she is life and light and perpetual pleasure; though from the over-generous dispositions of the mother they have had to struggle through many difficulties. Well, I began to say that I particularly wished that you could have seen them at this time, as through you I should have been able to enter into some explanations, which, imperfectly as I express myself in French, are difficult, and as you would have been able to confirm or contradict the reports which we receive from Caroline's Mother and Mr. Beaudouin of her interesting and amiable qualities. They both say that she resembles her Father most strikingly, and her letters give a picture of a feeling and ingenuous mind. Yet there must be something, I think, very unfavourable to true delicacy in French manners. Both C. and her Mother urge my going in October on this account, that, after a young woman is once engaged to be married, it is desirable that the delay afterwards should be as short as possible, as she is subject to perpetual scrutiny and unpleasant remarks, and one of the reasons which they urge for marriage in general is that a single woman in France, unless she

have a Fortune, is not treated with any *consideration*. . . . With respect to the mode of travelling, we, of course, must go as cheaply as possible consistent with tolerable comfort, and in an open carriage, because Sara cannot ride in a close one. Are any of the diligences so constructed? And supposing we can meet with no eligible companion from England, do you think we might venture to go alone? *I* think I should have no fears; but Sara would fain have a gentleman, and we can, at all events, desire Mr. Beaudouin to come from Paris to meet us at Calais. The expense, however, makes the last plan somewhat objectionable. Oh that Henry Robinson were going again! You know I like him well as a companion. And, still a thousand times better, oh that you were going! We should wish to carry presents of English manufacture. Can this be done without much risk or disagreeable trouble? . . . I wish you had sent me your address. I should have liked to have introduced our friend Beaudouin to you, and should have very much wished that it had been possible for you to see his brother. . . . I wish you had but visited La Fayette in his retirement. It was, however, a high gratification to see him anywhere. . . . Hazlitt's review [of "The Excursion"] appeared in *The Examiner*. It is not half so good a review as I should have thought he would have written; for, with all his disagreeable qualities, he is a very clever fellow. He says that the narrative parts of the poem are a dead weight upon it; but speaks in raptures of the philosophical. Now, that the narrative will be liked the best by most readers we have no doubt; therefore, we are most glad to hear that the religious and philosophical parts are relished. Of their merit I cannot entertain the faintest shadow of a doubt; yet I am afraid that, for a time, an outcry will be raised by many readers and many reviewers, which may injure the sale."

In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, begun on New Year's Eve, 1814, by William, and finished by Dorothy, the latter says:

"Sara is determined to visit you at Bury before her return to Rydale; but it is not possible for her to make any precise arrangements till our French journey is either set aside or the time fixed. April is the month proposed, and if the weather be tolerable we might go

as well then as at any other time; but I find that the king is to be anointed in June. All France will be gathered together, and I fear that there may be disturbances; for though all is quiet at present, it is evident enough that the party of discontented and turbulent spirits is very strong. On this account (as we cannot think of staying less than 9 or 10 weeks) I should wish our going to be *after* June—if it be at all. But I never, never so much dreaded to leave home as now, so deeply am I impressed with the image of what William and Mary have lately suffered in my absence, and with the uncertainty of all things. Besides the journey will be very expensive, which we can ill afford, and the money would be better spent in augmenting my Niece's wedding portion. To this effect I have written to her. She would not consent to marry without my presence, which was the reason that April was fixed. A few weeks will decide the point whether we go to France or not, and Sara will then be able to form her plans. At all events I think it would be the wisest way to take the first opportunity of going to Bury, yet that can hardly be before April, and then the other journey will most likely be forced upon us. I will if possible contrive, if I go, to see you on my way back, though for a short time, and will trust that you will soon be coming to Rydale. This is a plaguy business that I have teased you about. If it were not for my fears for what may happen at home, I could think of it with satisfaction—nay, with delight, for that dear young woman's sake, whom I believe to be thoroughly amiable. Oh that you were going again to France! Do you know of anybody going?"

Nothing could give a sharper sense of actuality, and of how the great movements of history wrench family life along with them, than Dorothy's next letters to Mrs. Clarkson. Napoleon's escape from Elba, his landing in France, the Hundred Days, Waterloo, the Restoration—how little we realize what havoc these changes must have wrought in the fragile network of society!

"*March* 16, 1815.

"We heard from Sara last night in answer to a proposal of mine that we should set off for France in the first week of May. This determination was made a

few days before the news of Buonaparte's entrance into that unhappy country had reached us; and, of course, our plans are for the present put a stop to. Whatever be the result of his projects, it is not likely that it would be prudent to go so soon as we had intended; and a very little time will show whether we can go at all or not. [Here follows speculation concerning Buonaparte's actions.] . . . We are very anxious, as I am sure you are, for every day's news, and it is one comfort, that suspense respecting the probabilities for or against France will soon be at an end. I do not at present carry my cares much farther. For the sake of our Friends I am truly distressed. The lady whom I mentioned to you from the first was a zealous Royalist, has often risked her life in defence of adherents to that cause, and she despised and detested Buonaparte. Poor creature! in the last letter which we had from her she spoke only of hope and comfort; said that the king's government was daily gaining strength, and Buonaparte's friends [coming over] in their hearts to the other side. A few days after the [evil tidings] reached her she would receive my letter containing the plan of our journey. Sara tells me that you had kindly proposed, in case we could not go to Bury, to meet William and me in London. It is now idle to talk of any plans in connection with a journey to Paris; but at any rate William has given up the idea of going to London this spring. I trust, however, that, if Sara does not go to Bury this spring or summer, we shall see you either there or in London at our return from France, provided it be safe to venture thither this year."

"*Tuesday, April 11th* [1815].

"My dear Friend,—

"In common with you, our minds have been occupied continually by the tremendous changes in France. Till we heard of the arrival of B. in Paris I never slept without dreaming of troubles connected with his fiendish ambition, and every night I was kept awake for hours. . . . We had given over taking a newspaper (except *The Courier*, which came from Keswick), but we could not exist without one sent directly to us. . . . Everybody here is anxious, but none a hundredth part so much as we are. We had a long letter from France written on the 19th and 20th. The letter was concluded at midnight. My Friend says:

'I hear troops entering the City. I think it is the avant-garde of Buonaparte. Good God! What is to become of us?' We have had another letter written the next day in miserable dejection; but she says no more of public affairs than that 'all is quiet.' Lodgings were taken for us in the Hotel du Jardin Turc [More?], Boulevard du Temple, in a pleasant part of Paris, as they describe it. Poor creatures, they say they are shipwrecked when just entering into port. Indeed it is a distressing situation, but I trust that we shall see them in Paris before the end of another twelvemonth.

"The White Doe is printing, and will be out, I hope, in two or three weeks. William will order a copy to be sent to you, but perhaps you can desire somebody to call for it at Longman's. The two volumes of poems are published, and he is sorry he cannot also spare you a copy of them; but he has only a certain number to dispose of. If you cannot afford to buy them, by applying to Henry Robinson, to whom William sends a copy, you can see them. I want you to read the new poems. Your receipt for a criticism in *The Philanthropist* is excellent, and we pray you earnestly to do the work yourself, for there is nobody here who can do it. It would be too independent in us to set about it; and Mr. De Quincey, notwithstanding his learning and his talents, can do nothing. He is eaten up by the spirit of procrastination; but if once in two or three years he actually does make an effort, he is so slow a labourer that no one who knows him would wish to appoint him to it." [She urges Mrs. Clarkson to write something to hasten the sale of The Excursion, saying: "That is all we care about. If this edition were once sold I should not have a moment's anxiety afterwards."]

In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, dated June 28 [1815], it appears that Dorothy had charge of the children at home while William and Mary were visiting the Clarksons at Bury, and were at Bocking and London and Coleorton. She speaks of her brother's "unconquerable agitation" when anything ails little William. "But strange it is," she declares, "that I can talk so long of private concerns when I have so much cause to be anxious for the arrival of this night's post, which is to bring tidings of the fate of nations. Upon the Amble-

side coach this morning was affixed a paper, 'Great News—*Abdication of Buonaparte*,' but no particulars."

In a letter of "Aug. 15" [1815], after a long outburst against the French and their English admirers, and the expression, "Would that all the English had Prussian hearts, and that our generals and counsellors had the soul of Blucher!" she says:

"It is impossible for me to think of going to Paris this year. We have had letters from our Friends written just after the return of the king. They were in great joy at that event, and urged me and my companions to go, all being safe and quiet. At the same time they waited our determination respecting Caroline's coming over. We could only answer that the time of meeting my Br. and Sr. was gone by, and that we could not appoint any particular plan, knowing of nobody about to return from Paris, and having no friends in London to whom we could with propriety entrust her, but we proposed that the Mother should look out for some person or persons coming to London, to whose care she might be consigned till we could hear from her of her arrival there. This I trust may not be difficult, as Madame Vallon has a numerous acquaintance. I wish you had been in London in lodgings. The great difficulty will be there; for people who might be relied upon for the journey must be continually coming from Paris."

Dorothy was not able to attend her niece's wedding, which was postponed till next year, as the following letter to Mrs. Clarkson shows:

"*April* 4, 1816.

"You ask me if I mean to go to France this spring or summer. I wish it very much, but William and Mary are unwilling that I should venture so soon. For my part I believe that there is nothing to fear for an obscure individual like me, and I believe William would consent provided I could hear of proper companions for the journey. I wish therefore that if you hear of anybody going who would be likely not to object to let me be of their party for the journey, I wish you would lose no time in letting me know. I do not like to put off year after year. Another war would make it impossible, and if I do not go when I can I think it may

be out of my power to go at all, and my motives for the journey are very strong. The young person is married to Mr. Beaudouin's Brother. We have just had a letter from them both, written a month after their marriage. I believe him to be a noble-minded, excellent man, and she seems to have well-grounded hopes of happiness, provided poverty can be kept out of doors, but though their present income is very well for two persons, it is not enough for a family. Mr. B. has a place under Government, and will have, they assure us, a certain increase of income in a short time; besides C.'s mother has the promise of a place for herself or one of her family in recompense for services performed by her for the royal cause; but I fear she may wait long for this, as the poor king has not wherewithal to reward all who deserve it. In case of Mr. B.'s death his widow will have half the amount of his present income as a pension. Mr. Eustace Beaudouin is still one of the Gardes du Corps. He is much attached to his sister-in-law, and has given us a very pleasing account of her. The mother's details of the wedding festivities would have amused you. She was to give the fête, she who perhaps for half a year to come will feel the effects of it at every dinner she cooks! Thirty persons were present to dinner, ball, and supper. The deputies of the department and many other respectable people were there. The bride was dressed in white sarsenet, with a white veil—' was the admiration of all who beheld her, but her modesty was her best ornament.' She kept her veil on the whole of the day. How truly French this is!"

On February 20, 1816, were married, by a magistrate, in Paris, Jean Baptiste Martin Baudouin and Anne Caroline Wordsworth, her father, "Williams Wordsworth, propriétaire, demeurant à Grasmer, Kendan, Duché de Westermorland, en Angleterre," giving his consent by affidavit.

CHAPTER XXII

"THE EXCURSION"

"THE EXCURSION" was published in a sumptuous quarto in July, 1814, with a wretched dedicatory sonnet to the Earl of Lonsdale, a short prose Preface, and 107 introductory lines of magnificent poetry, now printed as the last lines of "A Fragment of The Recluse." The price was two guineas. The plan of executing a great work, a long philosophical poem, which should embody the results of his experience and thinking, had been formed before even the first two books of "The Prelude" were composed. It has been discussed with Coleridge. It had finally taken in Wordsworth's life a supremacy contested only by desires for public service, such as we find translated in his tract on the Convention of Cintra. Yet with all the many explanations of his purpose which exist in his notes and correspondence, one can form no precise idea of what it was. This much, however, is plain; there was to be a poem, in three parts, entitled "The Recluse." "The Excursion" is the second member of this projected whole. Of the first part, only one Book was ever written, the splendid lines known as the "Fragment of The Recluse." This gives no clue as to how many books were intended to follow, nor with what topics they were to deal. Of a third part nothing was ever written, and there is no trace even of a plan. "The Prelude" is a separate work, and one would scarcely imagine, from reading "The Excursion," that it was not an independent poem. How it was to have been related to Parts I. and III. is not evident. We may take for granted that "The Recluse," that is, the entire group of poems, was carefully planned, though Coleridge's bewilderment, on finding "The Excursion" quite a different thing from

what he had expected, leads to the conclusion that an original and much grander design was abandoned. "The Excursion" as a whole has not in itself that unity which doubtless the projected work would have had, and which "The Prelude," taken by itself, actually has. There is no apparent reason why it should end where it does, and its purpose is not obvious. In the main, the first half contains the statement of a philosophical position, and the second half a number of human stories which are supposed in some way to establish or illustrate it.

The formal scheme of the whole is simple. The poet is represented as meeting accidentally a respected friend, an old Scottish peddler, whose travels have enriched his naturally powerful mind. This man, the Wanderer, relates the story of a poor woman whose happy home was broken up by "the plague of war," but who endured her fate with quiet courage. The description of the Wanderer, and this tale of Margaret, fill the First Book, which is in many ways distinct from the other eight. Much of it was written at Racedown and Alfoxden. The scene of Book One is in the south of England, but with the opening of Book Two and from that time to the end we are unmistakably in the Lake country.

The Wanderer, who is a Christian optimist, well furnished with theological dogma, and rather grimly triumphant in the apparent failure of the age of reason, invites the poet to walk with him to the lonely pass which connects Upper and Lower Langdale, there to visit the Solitary, a man who has withdrawn from a world in which his hopes have been baffled and his faith in God and man shaken. The Solitary tells the story of his life in Book Three, and the Wanderer in the Fourth attempts to correct his despondency by showing that communion with nature and the exercise of imagination are sources of divine knowledge, and capable of lifting the soul above the rough ground where reason stumbles. In Book Five all three descend to "a large and populous vale," which in most of its features is

the Vale of Grasmere, where they enter the churchyard and church, commenting on what they see. The Pastor joins them, and supports the Poet and the Wanderer in their efforts to correct the Solitary's views. The Sixth Book opens with a eulogy on the State and Church of England. The Pastor, looking at the green mounds of the dead, recalls the lives of many former members of his mountain parish. The mere recital of human stories, with no effort to point a moral, awakens in the Solitary a certain zest for things as they are. The Seventh Book is a continuation of the Sixth. In Book Eight the four speakers enter the parsonage, and the talk turns to a criticism of science, the rise of manufacturing industry, and the degradation of the agricultural population. In the Ninth Book the value of state schools and compulsory education is eloquently proclaimed; the Wanderer declares that an active principle pervades the universe; the Pastor identifies this spirit with the God of Christendom, to whom he utters a prayer of gratitude; and finally the Solitary, deeply affected, departs. " What renovation had been brought " to this dejected man will, if the poet receives encouragement from hope and gentle hearts and lofty minds, be told in future labours—*i.e.*, the Third and never-written part of " The Recluse."

A captious criticism might deny that there was sufficient connection between the theoretical and the practical parts of the poem; but it seems to me rather an evidence of Wordsworth's fidelity to nature that he refrained from distorting even imaginary facts to suit the most cherished theory. He realized that the most common events are the most important, and yet that common things do not wear, save to a poet's eye, the outward marks of their significance. So the unity of " The Excursion," as a philosophical treatise, is not impaired by the contrast between its abstract speculative part and the simple tales which follow. We have here an instance of what is perhaps the only proper method of building up a philosophical system. But as a work of art, designed to charm the senses and produce

an effect of smoothness and delight, the poem is no doubt marred by this violent contrast of methods.

What is the philosophical doctrine of "The Excursion"? First of all, that the universe is ruled by a spiritual Person, much like ourselves at our best, with affections and a will. Secondly, that human life, on the whole, is morally admirable and worth while, especially in view of the poet's belief in the future existence of souls. Thirdly, that correspondences exist between the human soul and external nature in its original beauty, or even as modified by man working in the spirit of nature, correspondences by means of which may be enjoyed a communion with the divinity existing in all things fair.

"The Excursion" marks the third phase of a great literary duel between optimism and a doubting mood which at least bore some semblance of pessimism. The first phase was represented by Pope's "Essay on Man"; the second by Voltaire's "Poem on the Lisbon Earthquake" and his novel "Candide." The French poet entered the combat with deeper seriousness and better skill than Pope. Shocked by the latter's easy acceptance of appearances, he appealed to history and individual experience to disprove the shallow faith that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Wordsworth, bidding the victor turn and meet a fresh antagonist, widens the field of argument so as to include not only the phenomena of observation, but the objects of faith. If there is a merciful and all-powerful spirit in the universe, the face of disaster is altered, and what seems waste may be the seed of future gain. In the light of eternity it may be that events seemingly of the utmost perverseness may prove to have been ordained for good. Furthermore, in the lives of many men and women who have to outward appearance been failures, compensations even in this world may be discerned—patience learned through suffering, humility through defeat, strength from striving, and many another virtue easily overlooked except by the eye of love. And it is always with the eye of love that Wordsworth studies

his characters. In one after another of the sketches which illustrate "The Excursion," unexpected kindness and tenderness are discovered in harsh or dull or merely ordinary persons, and some of those who were in their time esteemed most unhappy are found to have drunk from hidden springs of joy.

The poet offers no new argument in favour of personal immortality. He is fain to rest content with mere assertion, and here, certainly, his character-sketches lend little or no support to his theory; for if we are convinecd that there is less evil and unhappiness in life than we supposed, if the life and death of men are seen to be similar in majesty and naturalness to the life and death of trees, we shall feel less need for a doctrine of future compensation. Yet Wordsworth, without leading up to it, insists upon the doctrine. The Wanderer, who no doubt voices the author's theological opinions, says:

> I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore
> Are glorified; or, if they sleep, shall wake
> From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.
> Hope, below this, consists not with belief
> In mercy, carried infinite degrees
> Beyond the tenderness of human hearts;
> Hope, below this, consists not with belief
> In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,
> That finds no limits but her own pure will.

The force and frequency with which the poet enunciates these sublime commonplaces should not be mistaken for argument. He merely proves that he is himself convinced. He goes so far as to conclude, from the strength of his own feelings, that instinct and subconscious apprehensions, and even superstition, are truer guides than reason. He as much as says that a man had better trust the judgment of remote and savage ancestors than his own. It is a plea for obscurantism. But it is not merely this. To poets more than to other men, and to Wordsworth more than to other poets, belongs a faculty for discovering those precious yet subtle truths which the net of reason is too coarse to catch. "The Excursion" is a vindication of this faculty, which may be

defined as the power of interpreting Nature by Imagination. Through exercising it, we are told, primitive man discovered the rudimentary laws of astronomy, peopled the streams and groves with divinities, and developed a spirit of reverence. Speaking to one who is supposed to represent a rationalistic age, the Wanderer says:

> Access for you
> Is yet preserved to principles of truth,
> Which the imaginative Will upholds
> In seats of Wisdom, not to be approached
> By the inferior Faculty that moulds,
> With her minute and speculative pains,
> Opinion, ever changing.

The poet of "The Excursion," it should be distinctly noted, claims for the faculty of immediate vision a vast though vague superiority over the understanding. To support this claim, he brings only transcendental proofs, the cry of the heart, the mind's impatience. He is far enough now from the main principle of the Enlightenment—that the supreme distinction of man is his understanding, and that by this, as a touchstone, all emotions, instincts, faiths, and revelations, must ultimately be tested. Speaking generally, the religion and the poetry, the music, painting, and sculpture, the politics and social order, of the nineteenth century, till near its close, owed their peculiar tone and direction to an acceptance of the doctrine which Wordsworth was now proclaiming—the doctrine of immediacy, of direct spontaneous apprehension, of the soul's freedom from all trammels, either of the senses or of logic. Science, on the other hand, from which a fresh art and a renovated politics have grown, remained on the whole faithful to the humbler philosophy of the eighteenth century and of Wordsworth's better period. Humbler I say, though the charge made against it, a hundred years ago, was that it aspired too much.

To what extent Wordsworth in "The Excursion" shows the influence of German transcendentalism, of Kant and his followers, and particularly of Schelling, is another part of the subject. Even if traces of such in-

fluence are found, they may be due to conversations with Coleridge, rather than to Wordsworth's own reading. He needed not, at all events, to look abroad, or even to Plato and the English Platonists of the seventeenth century, for his favourite theme—namely, that the peculiar act of poetry is to indicate where and how imagination may interpret nature. We may fairly credit him in so far with originality, with passionate originality. He knew from experience that a poetic interpretation of nature sets men free from timid calculations, lifts them over unnecessary processes, brings them out of themselves, and puts them in a larger world than they could otherwise enter. After the famous description of a sea-shell whose murmurings express

> Mysterious union with its native sea,

the poet exclaims:

> Even such a shell the universe itself
> Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
> I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
> Authentic tidings of invisible things;
> Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
> And central peace subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation.

Unfortunately, the poet is not content, as in the "Lines Written above Tintern Abbey," to proclaim his joy in this discovery. He shows that he is irritated with those who find their highest satisfaction elsewhere. The real antithesis of imagination is not reason, but apathy, as he virtually admits in his Argument to the Fourth Book; yet it is reason, after all, which he attacks in the text.

Unquestionably, Wordsworth, at this stage of his development, was inclining to a philosophical attitude which was the very opposite of the one he had maintained under Godwin's influence. The strength of his imagination had even in childhood made him lean in the direction of mysticism. From Rousseau he may have received an additional impulse. And now the restraining influence of Godwin was withdrawn. The essence of this type of philosophy has been very fairly expressed

by Mr. Bertrand Russell in his essay on "Mysticism and Logic," as "the belief in insight as against discursive analytic knowledge; the belief in a way of wisdom, sudden, penetrating, coercive, which is contrasted with the slow and fallible study of outward appearance by a science relying wholly upon the senses." Developing this idea, he continues: "It is common to speak of an opposition between instinct and reason; in the eighteenth century the opposition was drawn in favour of reason, but under the influence of Rousseau and the romantic movement instinct was given the preference, first by those who rebelled against artificial forms of government and thought, and then, as the purely rationalistic defence of traditional theology became increasingly difficult, by all who felt in science a menace to creeds which they associated with a spiritual outlook on life and the world."

But we must always be on our guard against the common unthinking view that imagination deals with unrealities, and the almost equally false view that it deals only with the general, and not the particular. Nor does it operate only by a process of comparison. Imagination works primarily by appreciating that which is unique, and which therefore cannot be wholly expressed in terms of anything extraneous. This, at least, is the first step. Every object in the universe is unique. Not all poets are imaginative, by any means, but an imaginative poet understands the things of nature by exercising what we may call, in a phrase of M. Bergson's, "the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it, and therefore inexpressible." In thus reverencing the concrete, science and the highest poetry agree, and they have their reward in the discovery of laws which are both general and spiritual. Wordsworth, by reporting faithfully the particularities of nature, was able to do justice to the material world. Only by appreciating it could he transcend it, for the spiritual life, so far as we *know*, is inherent in the material.

In controversy, Wordsworth loses charm in proportion as he displays power. He shows a desire to carry everything before him. We feel that he is not generous. In this poem a figure is set up, called the Solitary, who is supposed to have suffered many illusions during the Revolution. Moreover, he has been embittered by the death of his wife and children. Quite gratuitously it is assumed that, because he had entertained "an overweening trust" in "the transcendent wisdom of the age," therefore he

> through the course
> Of private life licentiously displayed
> Unhallowed actions.

This is unfair to the poor Solitary, and still more so to the Reverend Joseph Fawcett, his prototype. The dramatic effect of the poem is weakened by thus making one of the speakers a man of straw. He is under suspicion from the first. His smiles are said to be "sardonic" and his words "sarcastic." The reader feels this injustice, and would be very glad to see the Solitary triumph over his pharisaical opponent, the Wanderer. The latter, who is a philosophical prig, is shocked to find, on the sacred soil of England, a copy of Voltaire's "Candide"—

> dull product of a scoffer's pen,
> Impure conceits discharging from a heart
> Hardened by impious pride!

If even the most appreciative and grateful readers feel that somehow "The Excursion," in spite of many noble qualities, is not quite a success, the chief reason for discontent may be this unbecoming eagerness of Wordsworth, the controversialist, which has made him unfair to one of the chief speakers in the dialogue. No other objections that have been urged against this great poem have much weight. To say it is too long is to beg the question. To call its subject-matter prosaic is to imply that the highest flights of speculation and the infinitely touching details of actual life are unsuitable for poetic treatment. Or is it that the treatment is unpoetical? Here we must discriminate between mere

style and the general pitch of the work. That it is pitched in a poetic and not a prose key would be evident to anyone who should try to rewrite or retell even a few lines of it. There are defects of style, the worst being the use of long parentheses and double negatives, and the piling-up of phrases when a sentence is already structurally complete. But the diction is in the main suitable both to the subjects discussed and to the speakers. There is, to be sure, a jarring discrepancy between the minute and homely realism of the narratives and the Wanderer's eloquent speeches. On one page we have the simple details of his bringing up, and on the next he speaks as sublimely as Milton's Raphael, and, like him, to an audience of two. A certain pietistic flavour, something new in Wordsworth, is perceptible here and there. It is assumed, for example, that men of science are necessarily unimaginative, cold, irreligious,

> Lost in a gloom of uninspired research.

We deplore the fact that Wordsworth had surrendered so much of his natural independence as to accept this foolish view, and must be prepared for many other instances of a change. Such things do not disturb our respect when we find them in the pages of Cowper, where at the very least they sound pleasantly quaint; but in Wordsworth they indicate a moral decline and a break with his own past. There are unnecessary passages, chiefly of description. Certainly, however, those readers at least who do not complain of Cowper's leisurely pace, or the vast redundancy in Swinburne, or Tennyson's elegant embroidery in "The Idylls of the King," might, one would suppose, easily tolerate a few hundred unnecessary lines of Wordsworth. That the poem comes to no striking climax is due perhaps to the fact that it is only the second part of a trilogy. That it is badly named must be admitted. So much for its shortcomings! They are far outnumbered and outweighed by features of beauty and manifestations of wisely directed power. The poem is full of minor attractions besides the interest

of its great philosophical theme. For one thing, it is pre-eminently the poem of the Lake country, and in no other work of Wordsworth or anyone else has the life of a particular "nook of English ground" been portrayed with more distinctness and poetic truth. There are dozens of passages the full force of which can be felt only by one who has lived in the vales and known some of their inhabitants of the old stock. The poet tells what he *saw*: the dull red stains and tufts of wool left on corner-stones by sheep, the lamb sheltered by its mother on a sunny ledge—we feel more grateful to him for noticing these than for his descriptions of sunsets, which other poets have not failed to observe. The house of the ingenious sporting parson, which is depicted so minutely, still stands beside the road from Grasmere to Wythburn. In Dorothy's Journal we have a dozen records of stopping there for tea, and the Simpsons, who lived there, were at one time the only other educated people in the vale. The substance of this sketch at least—and we may safely assume that it is the case with most of the others—was obtained by direct and long-continued observation. True scientific and true poetical methods are much the same, after all. One is reminded of Henri Poincaré's remark that facts which have a chance of recurring are simple facts; and, as if he were actually thinking of Wordsworth's process, he again says (in his essay on "Science and Method"): "What we [men of science] must aim at is not so much to ascertain resemblances and differences as to discover similarities hidden under apparent discrepancies."

"The Excursion" is singularly rich in variety. It is like one of the larger Lake-country rivers, the Rothay, the Brathay, or the Derwent, in the great number of reaches that diversify its course, no two of them alike, and every one a world.

After all, however, the chief element of biographical interest in this poem is that, scarcely less than "The Prelude," it is a commentary on the Revolution. Even the great doctrine of the "life" of what men call

"inanimate" objects is a part of the levelling process favoured by the Revolution. In one sense "The Excursion" is intended to demonstrate the failure of Revolutionary hopes and the resulting prostration of those who held them. Let us admit our failure, the poet seems to say, and retrieve our error by building on a broader basis. To be sure, the undercurrent of Book One flows in the opposite direction. In spite of revisions, it still shows its relationship to "Guilt and Sorrow" and "The Female Vagrant." The life of the poor is described as if from within, by one who was himself separated by no barrier of caste from the social world of the unfortunate Margaret. War is considered from an economic standpoint and without regard to national pride, glory, or honour.

We rejoice that, though the poet recanted from the philosophy of Revolution, he still preserved those sympathies which made him the poet of Revolution. He scorned the fundamental doctrine of aristocracy, namely, that God has seen fit, in His inscrutable wisdom, to withhold from the mass of mankind the perception of those moral truths upon which political coherence depends. In a passage of great eloquence (Book IX., lines 206-257) he asserts the equality of all men in the world of sense and in the common possession of reason, imagination, conscience, and the assurance of immortality, concluding:

> The smoke ascends
> To heaven as lightly from the cottage-hearth
> As from the haughtiest palace. He, whose soul
> Ponders this true equality, may walk
> The fields of earth with gratitude and hope;
> Yet, in that meditation, will he find
> Motive to sadder grief, as we have found;
> Lamenting ancient virtues overthrown,
> And for the injustice grieving, that hath made
> So wide a difference between man and man.

"The Excursion" was received by Wordsworth's friends with deep respect, by some of them with enthusiasm, and by one with disappointment. It was much noticed in the reviews. Among that small

portion of the public who took any interest in poetry it appears to have established his reputation as an author who had done something "big," though the number who actually read it was probably small. Scott's novels and poetical romances, Byron's poems, and the newspaper accounts of Napoleon's last campaign, left little opportunity for doing justice to a work of such length and depth. Upon the intellectually vulgar, who are ever ready to ridicule genius, an ineffaceable impression was produced by the first sentence of Jeffrey's review in *The Edinburgh*, "This will never do!" They were glad to have the matter so quickly and amusingly settled. In consequence both of the favour and of the disfavour met by the poem, it became famous at once, and henceforth Wordsworth was often—too often—known as "the author of 'The Excursion.'"

Charles Lamb, thanking Wordsworth for an early copy, pronounced it the noblest conversational poem he had ever read. He said he recognized the story of Margaret, having remembered it since the time he first saw its author, at Stowey. He makes a comical protest against the amount of description of mountain scenery. Himself this has not overpowered or discouraged, though "Mary seems to have felt it occasionally a little too powerfully"; she thought it doubtful whether by Wordsworth's system a Liver in Towns had a Soul to be Saved. He flies to the rescue on the question of the dulness of "Candide"; it was dull even to him, who had "a wider range in buffoonery —too much toleration perhaps." He challenges the poet to declare whether he is a Christian or whether the Pedlar and the Priest speak only as dramatic characters. He wished to review the poem in *The Quarterly*, but was too busy in the early part of the autumn with extra work at the East India House. When his article finally came out, late in the year, it had been so disfigured by Gifford, the editor of *The Quarterly Review*, that Lamb's face burned with vexation as he read it. "Every warm expression," he wrote

to Wordsworth, "is changed to a nasty cold one;" "the eyes are pulled out and the bleeding sockets are left."

Henry Crabb Robinson first saw a copy of the "great new poem" at Norwich, on August 13, 1814.

"It has," he wrote, "afforded me less intense pleasure on the whole, perhaps, than I had expected, but it will be a source of frequent gratification. The wisdom and high moral character of the work are beyond anything of the same kind with which I am acquainted, and the spirit of the poetry flags much less frequently than might be expected. There are passages which run heavily, tales which are prolix, and reasonings which are spun out, but in general the narratives are exquisitely tender. . . . Wordsworth has succeeded better in light and elegant painting in this poem than in any other."

We must remember that Robinson was a lenient reader. He was one of Wordsworth's first disciples, and by nature loyal. And his acquaintance with German poetry and metaphysics had accustomed him on the one hand to the use of plain diction in verse, and on the other to any amount of prolixity. He frequently recurs to the subject of "The Excursion," which he reread with increasing approval.

Southey was unstinting in his praise. Wordsworth was anxious for a favourable verdict from Poole, and doubtless got one. He had thoughts especially of Poole when describing the ill-effects of manufacturing industry. There was by this time something like a Wordsworth circle in London, including even so incorrigible a romancer and sentimentalizer as Leigh Hunt. Flaxman and Haydon belonged to the number. Especially after the appearance of Jeffrey's damnatory criticism in *The Edinburgh Review*, it became a touchstone of good taste to have read and enjoyed the poem.

Coleridge's judgment, which of course Wordsworth most anxiously awaited, was long withheld. He finally explained his attitude, in a very manly letter, making no attempt to conceal the fact that he was disappointed. His criticism went far below the surface, to the design

and substance of the poem. He knew how all-important to Wordsworth it was that this supreme effort should show increase of power and prove a memorable contribution to the world's intellectual wealth. Yet, as he compared the ideas in "The Excursion" with those he remembered having discussed with his friend, he felt that they were meagre, unsystematic, and often commonplace. He traced in outline the great philosophical poem which he had in mind, such a poem as a Christian Lucretius should have written, but the world had never seen. Perhaps Wordsworth might have written such a work, with Coleridge at his side. The combined genius of the two would certainly have been required.

The first hint of Coleridge's dissatisfaction is found in a letter of his to Lady Beaumont, dated April 3, 1815. He writes: "Of the Excursion, excluding the tale of the ruined cottage (the story of Margaret, begun at Racedown), which I have ever thought the finest poem in our language, comparing it with any of the same or similar length, I can truly say that one-half the number of its beauties would make all the beauties of all his contemporary poets collectively mount to the balance: but yet—the fault may be in my own mind—I do not think, I did not feel, it equal to the work on the growth of his own spirit." He conjectured that the inferiority "might have been occasioned by the influence of self-established convictions having given to certain thoughts and expressions a depth and force which they had not for readers in general." This is a perfect formula for a whole swarm of objections urged by many readers against most of Wordsworth's poetry. With time, as other men's thoughts and expressions have proved more or less ephemeral, and Wordsworth's have in an eminent degree held their own, this class of objection has tended to disappear. Wordsworth must have felt sorely tried when Coleridge, no matter with how much dignity of phrase, uttered the common charge. For it amounted to denying that he possessed that insight into the common heart of man which was

the source of half his greatness, and it was a condemnation of his artistic method, the method upon which he once thought Coleridge and he had fully agreed.

Passing to his other objection, Coleridge continued: "Whatever in Lucretius is poetry is not philosophical, whatever is philosophical is not poetry; and in the very pride of confident hope I looked forward to The Recluse as the *first* and *only* true philosophical poem in existence. Of course, I expected the colours, music, imaginative life, and passion of *poetry*; but the matter and arrangement of *philosophy*; not doubting from the advantages of the subject that the totality of a system was not only capable of being harmonized with, but even calculated to aid, the unity (beginning, middle, and end) of a poem. Thus, whatever the length of the work might be, still it was a *determinate* length; of the subjects announced, each would have its own appointed place, and, excluding repetitions, each would relieve and rise in interest above the other."

In short, he hoped that his strong-willed friend, whose superiority he so ungrudgingly admitted, would do in verse what he himself had vainly dreamed of doing in the easier medium of prose. He was convinced that what the world needed most was a systematic and, at the same time, literary statement of philosophic idealism, together with a glowing demonstration of its vital identity with Christian doctrine and history. After his terrific recoil from the "sensational" psychology of Locke, he had flung himself towards the opposite extreme. While appearing to float aimlessly in a mist of many colours and no distinct outline, he was really high above the flight of other minds, at an altitude whence he descried, like an eagle, the fields of future conflict.

CHAPTER XXIII

RETREAT AND SURRENDER

THE appearance of " The Excursion " drew forth many elaborate and able reviews, several of which have considerable value in literary history because they go deep into general questions with which criticism has always been concerned. One of the reviewers was William Hazlitt, in *The Examiner* for August 21 and 28 and October 2, 1814. His judgment of the poem as a whole and of Wordsworth's genius was highly favourable, though he professed to think the poet had exaggerated the goodness and charm of country life, and used subjects that were too " low." He boldly rebukes Wordsworth for his cold renunciation of Revolutionary hopes. Yet there is no better statement of Wordsworth's fundamental æsthetic principle than these words of Hazlitt: " He only sympathizes with those forms of feeling which mingle at once with his own identity or the stream of general humanity. To him the great and the small are the same; the near and the remote; what happens and what only is. The common and the permanent, like the Platonic ideas, are his only realities."

Jeffrey's article, in *The Edinburgh Review* for November, 1814, began brutally, " This will never do," a sentence which was caught up by the public and seriously hindered the sale of the poem. His objection to the " lowness " of the characters was what might have been expected from him because he still disapproved of Wordsworth on the ground—then already a mistaken ground—that he was a teacher of subversive political doctrine. He failed to see that the poem expressed a modification, almost a recantation, of Wordsworth's earlier views. He also pretended to find the speculative passages incomprehensible, though with

very slight trouble he might have seen that their purpose was to give poetic form to the Kantian ethics, psychology, and metaphysics, as is marvellously illustrated in the following lines:

> Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
> And passions hold a fluctuating seat:
> But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
> And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
> Duty exists;—immutably survive,
> For our support, the measures and the forms,
> Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
> Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.

Charles Lamb, in *The Quarterly Review*, criticized the poem much more favourably. He formulates one of its chief purposes in the following sentence: "The general tendency of the argument (which we might almost affirm to be the leading moral of the poem) is to abate the pride of the calculating understanding and to reinstate the *imagination* and the *affections* in those seats from which modern philosophy has laboured but too successfully to expel them."

Wordsworth was in after years extremely sensitive to the charge that his early poetry had a pantheistic tendency (as was certainly the case).

One of the first traces of this objection is found in a long article on "The Excursion" by James Montgomery, in *The Eclectic Review* for January, 1815. He is sorry, for Wordsworth's own sake and for the thousands in future generations who may be his readers, that he has not dealt more with Sin and Redemption through the Blood of Christ. If only the poem contained "an honest exposition of the Christian Faith," it would be "the most perfect strain of moral poetry in the English, or perhaps in any language."

Commenting on this article, Crabb Robinson wrote in his diary, January 5, 1815, that it raised "a doubt as to the religious character of the poem. It is insinuated that Nature is a sort of God throughout, and, consistently with the Calvinistic orthodoxy of the reviewer, the lamentable error of representing a love of Nature as

a sort of purifying state of mind, and the study of Nature as a sanctifying process, is emphatically pointed out."*

Montgomery's strictures are not at all applicable to "The Excursion," though they would have been quite apt if made in reference to "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," "Lines Written in Early Spring," "To my Sister," "Expostulation and Reply," "The Tables Turned," "Peter Bell," and many passages in "The Prelude," especially in the earliest version, all of which are distinctly pantheistic or naturalistic.

Two handsomely printed volumes, with two execrable frontispieces, representing pictures by Sir George Beaumont, appeared in March, 1815, with the title "Poems by William Wordsworth, including Lyrical Ballads and the Miscellaneous Pieces of the Author, with additional poems, a new preface, and a supplementary essay." Longman was the publisher, and the book was dedicated to Sir George Beaumont. The supplementary essay is printed at the end of Volume One, and the great Preface to "Lyrical Ballads" is stuffed in, as if to fill space, at the end of Volume Two. The new preface cannot compare in weight of matter or eloquence of style with the old one. Here is found his famous distinction between Fancy and Imagination, a distinction not imperceptible in a general way to any careful observer. He brusquely reverses the older definitions, based, it is true, on etymology rather than usage, and insists that Fancy is the visualizing faculty, and Imagination the faculty whereby values are imputed to objects to which they do not, in fact, belong. He maintains, with the violence of one who is defending a statement he knows cannot be proved, that there is a tremendous difference in kind between Imagination and Fancy. Poor Fancy comes by many a hard knock, while her sublime sister

* Robinson had already, on December 19, reported a conversation with Flaxman on the subject of a supposed piece of impiety in the fragment prefixed to "The Excursion": "Flaxman took umbrage at some mystical expressions in the fragment in the Preface, in which Wordsworth talks of *seeing Jehovah unalarmed*. 'If my brother had written that,' said Flaxman, 'I should say, Burn it.'"

receives all the poet's homage; yet in the end he fails to prove that there is more than a difference of intensity and seriousness between them.

That Wordsworth set great store by the system of classification observed in these volumes is evident from his having clung to it in subsequent editions. It is supposed to carry the reader's mind over the whole of life, from childhood to the grave, and beyond. But another method conflicts with this, for some of the poems are grouped according to the faculties of the mind to which their creation was chiefly attributed, and both plans are abandoned in order to permit the introduction of poems on the naming of places, sonnets dedicated to liberty and—sonnets! The scheme was thrust upon Wordsworth by some tricksy sprite for his undoing. It has nothing to recommend it, and has been wisely dropped by some editors in favour of a chronological order. His divisions, however, are as follows: Volume One contains Poems referring to the period of Childhood, Juvenile Pieces, Poems founded on the Affections, Poems of the Fancy, and Poems of the Imagination; Volume Two contains Poems of the Imagination (continued), Poems proceeding from Sentiment and Reflection, Miscellaneous Sonnets, Sonnets dedicated to Liberty (in two parts: I., those published in 1807; and II., from the year 1807 to 1813), Poems on the Naming of Places, Inscriptions, Poems referring to the Period of Old Age, Epitaphs and Elegiac Poems, and the Ode on Intimations, etc. In the table of contents are given the dates of composition and of first publication. Of "An Evening Walk," "Descriptive Sketches," and "The Female Vagrant," only extracts are reprinted, these fragments giving a very imperfect idea of the originals.

Many textual changes were made in subsequent editions, but the two volumes of 1815, together with "The Excursion," set Wordsworth fairly before the world. Here was enough poetry of the highest order to insure immortality, and he knew it. He was aware also of the ample justice done him by several of the greatest

critics in Britain—by Coleridge, the greatest of all, and Lamb, the pioneer of fame. Even carping judges like Hazlitt appreciated his merits. De Quincey, whose own style was certain to keep his name alive, was his disciple. Southey proclaimed him the first of living poets. The sound mind of Walter Scott had pronounced in his favour. He had a fairly wide and growing circle of readers. Why should he have cared whether the larger public came round to him a few years sooner or later? This is the question that rises as we read the Essay supplementary to the Preface.

His theme at the beginning of this extraordinary production is the hostility of his "Adversaries," whom he assails in terms more violent than any that had ever been applied to himself. After this unpleasing display of temper, he begins a wonderful Defence of Poetry, worthy of all praise.

He wishes there were a better word than "taste" for expressing the quality of appreciative judgment, "Taste" originally signifying only a passive receiving of impressions, whereas there is something active, aggressive, and dynamic in that function of the mind when properly exerted. He quotes a remark long since made to him by Coleridge, "that every Author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed." Even ancient authors, of acknowledged authority, "have to call forth and communicate *power*" in their readers before they can be enjoyed; and "this service, in a still greater degree, falls upon an original Writer, at his first appearance in the world." This is Wordsworth's defence of his own course. "Of genius the only proof is, the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before; of genius, in the fine arts, the only infallible sign is the widening of the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honour, and benefit, of human nature."

This essay, in its three parts, first its attack upon uninspired and unsympathetic criticism, secondly its original review of English poetry since the Renaissance,

and thirdly its vindication of the claims of originality in poetry, is one of the most important polemical documents in support of the Romantic Movement. Its vigour and eloquence are more commendable than its temper.

Of previously unpublished poems the edition of 1815 does not contain many. Except the thirty-two fresh Sonnets dedicated to Liberty, the new pieces would not have been enough to fill a very slender volume, and, of these, only "Laodamia" bears witness to any broadening of sympathy or advance in technique. To glance at the table of contents, with the dates of the poems appended, is to be startled with the conviction that somewhere between 1807 and 1815 the poet's development had been arrested. This conviction is strengthened when we contrast the natural fire of the twenty-six political sonnets published in 1807 and the bigness of their subjects with the artificial heat and far-fetched topics of the thirty-two new ones. Notwithstanding Charles Lamb's cordial approval of "Yarrow Visited," it is not worthy of a place beside its tender, wistful, magical predecessor, with which it compares even less favourably than broad noon to dewy, expectant dawn. Sonnets on the poet's domestic affairs, translations from Michael Angelo and Chiabrera, inscriptions for urns and seats in Sir George Beaumont's grounds, verses on one of Sir George's paintings, two or three other sonnets, and "The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale," which is little more than a parody on "The Reverie of Poor Susan," make up the rest of the novelties.

Early in May, 1815, the poet and Mrs. Wordsworth, accompanied by Sara Hutchinson, went to London. There were business difficulties with Richard Wordsworth, whose death, without his having signed certain papers, would have deprived Dorothy of her small patrimony. There was also a natural desire to see how the recent publications were being received. Coleridge was living now at Calne, near Bristol. Robinson and the Lambs welcomed the visitors with joy. The former wrote in his Diary on May 7:

" On returning from a walk to Shooter's Hill, I found a card from Wordsworth, and running to Lamb's I found Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth there. After sitting half an hour with them, I accompanied them to their lodgings, near Cavendish Square. Mrs. Wordsworth appears to be a mild and amiable woman, not so lively or animated as Miss Wordsworth, but, like her, devoted to the poet."

On June 15 Robinson spent the forenoon with Wordsworth, who spoke of having called on Leigh Hunt, and of having heard from him about an article of Hazlitt's in the last Sunday's *Examiner*. Hazlitt had accused Southey and Wordsworth of apostasy from their old political faith. Hunt disclaimed the article. The attack occurs in a paragraph on Milton's consistency; *he* had not written paltry sonnets on the " Royal fortitude," like the sonnet to the king " in the Last Edition of the Works of a modern Poet." This was an allusion to Wordsworth's sonnet on King George, composed in 1813 and published in 1815. The critic had also hinted that Wordsworth had been guided by base motives in omitting from his collection " The Female Vagrant," his old poem on the miseries inflicted on the poor by war. We have here the germ of that tradition upon which Browning's " Lost Leader " was more or less consciously founded, for Browning admitted that he had the older poet's defection vaguely in mind, at least.

On June 18 Robinson breakfasted at Wordsworth's and stayed till two o'clock, B. R. Haydon, the painter, being present. He makes no further mention of the poet in London, at this time, and by the 28th the latter is in the north country once more, rejoicing in the news of Waterloo, with awe and sorrow for the fallen.

" The White Doe of Rylstone, or The Fate of The Nortons," was published by Longman in May, 1815, during its author's stay in London. It appeared in a handsome quarto. Facing the title-page is an engraving of a painting by Sir George Beaumont, which represents a scene in the poem. There are a brief Advertisement, as reprinted in subsequent editions, the sonnet begin-

ning " Weak is the will of Man, his judgment blind," a quotation from Lord Bacon, and a poetical epistle to Mrs. Wordsworth, dated Rydal Mount, April 20, 1815. The passage from Bacon is to the effect that " Man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon Divine protection and favour, gathereth a force and faith which human Nature in itself could not obtain," just as a dog, strengthened in heart by reliance upon a man, receives a confidence above its own natural power. This is a singularly apt condensation of the moral of the tale. Then follows the poem itself, with the verses on " The Force of Prayer, or The Founding of Bolton Priory," and the Notes.

Many considerations demanded that after the battle of Waterloo Wordsworth should devote his powers to stemming the tide of reaction. A people not naturally lustful for military glory had turned aside from peaceful pursuits to take part in a twenty years' war, and had been victorious. The nation was now absolutely safe from foreign danger. It had nothing further to gain from keeping up a great armament or fostering a warlike spirit. On the contrary, its industries being prostrate, its debt enormous, its taxation high and ill-apportioned, its working class impoverished and starving, its landowners and capitalists in possession of undue advantage, its schools, colleges, scientific societies, and charities unsettled, what it needed was internal reform. Public law, as must always be the case in time of war, had been tampered with by the authorities. The liberties of the people had been infringed. The progress of democracy had been checked. It seemed as if political and social idealists had been rebuked by some divine voice, and to the thunder of destiny meaner tongues did not fail to add their taunting chorus. It was a second Restoration, without the personal corruption and the public glitter.

Wordsworth, as we have had abundant opportunity to observe, deemed himself, and hitherto justly deemed himself, the Milton of his age. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that his chief interest was political. The peculiarities of his art are due to political principles,

or at least to a world-view of which a certain theory of human values is an essential element. In the present crisis it was his duty to speak on behalf of the highest national good, having first applied his unrivalled powers of sympathetic analysis to the discovery of that wherein this good consisted. And he did speak. We should be doing him a grave injustice by assuming that he did not think before he spoke; but his study of the situation was as vain as the voice was feeble. He quite failed to see where the real danger lay, and he trembled at phantoms. He rejoiced with the rejoicing multitude, when humble searching of heart would have better become a wise man. In fact, he was at this point and for the rest of his life no seer; the vision of England's destiny was denied to him; henceforth he seldom made a political prediction which time has verified, or which shows him to have appreciated the forces that were moulding the future.

We have already seen how numerous and subtle were the processes of decline in moral vigour which had been going on in Wordsworth's character for twelve or fourteen years. The result is distressingly apparent in the poems he wrote to celebrate the fall of Napoleon. He composed in 1816 no less than four odes, two shorter pieces in the manner of the ode, and five sonnets, on this subject. It was a legitimate subject for English poetry at that time, but not for boastful pæans.

The feeling displayed in Wordsworth's verses is intemperate, inhuman, and irreligious. He assumes that the Almighty is on England's side. We forgive the vanquished when they console themselves with such faith, but of the victor we are inclined to ask, "What would be your opinion if you were beaten?" As if to be avenged for her betrayal in the region of morals, Truth refused to show herself even in the sphere of art, and these verses are among the least natural that can be found in the whole range of English literature. They are a denial of all those principles of poetic diction the establishment of which is an honour to Wordsworth's insight and their maintenance a credit to his courage.

The keynote of artificiality is struck in the first words of the "Thanksgiving Ode," "Hail, orient Conqueror of gloomy Night!" We have "Pierian Sisters," "sage Mnemosyne," the "Olympian summit," a hierarchy of angels and seraphs, and much besides of the old repertory which men are now agreed to call pre-Wordsworthian. Many lines which would have been appropriate enough in Spenser's days or Milton's or Dryden's savour of affectation when found in the pages of Wordsworth. Some of the stanzas, owing to their relationship to poetry of an older date and their remoteness from the language of the author's own time, read like splendid school exercises. This is not to say that there are not one or two fine things, even in a poem which claims the Spirit of Wisdom, Love, and Progress as a tribal Deity. It is no excuse to reply that the ancient Jews made the same assertion. In a stanza which ends with the banal blasphemy,

> Thy presence turns the scale of doubtful fight,
> Tremendous God of battles, Lord of Hosts!

we find such lively images as these:

> He springs the hushed Volcano's mine,
> He puts the Earthquake on her still design.

But on the whole we may say that the time was already past when a great poet, writing on War, could, without defalcation of genius, express merely or mainly a sense of pride and joy. The feelings of compunction, perplexity, and horror, which Wordsworth and Coleridge manifested in their earlier references to the subject, are much more in accord with the modern conscience.

In his preface to his "Thanksgiving Ode," Wordsworth showed, indeed, that he had been troubled with scruples. He met an imagined rebuke with a prediction which proved false, when he wrote, in reference to the distresses of the poor: "If the author has given way to exultation, unchecked by these distresses, it might be sufficient to protect him from a charge of insensibility, should he state his own belief that these sufferings will

be transitory." Comforting himself with this easy assumption, which the history of the next thirty years in England was to deny, he goes on to advocate the maintenance of a large army, and especially of schools for instruction in military science.

This poem, with several others of the same character, was published by Longman in 1816, under the following title: "Thanksgiving Ode, January 18, 1816, with other Short Pieces, chiefly relating to recent public events, by William Wordsworth." The Advertisement, or preface, is dated March 18, 1816. The little octavo volume also contains the "Ode composed in January, 1816," eight sonnets, verses "In Recollection of the Expedition of the French into Russia" ("Humanity delighting to behold"), the ode "Who rises on the Banks of Seine," and "Elegiac Verses" (afterwards named "Invocation to the Earth"). Almost all these pieces were composed in February. The chill of winter remains in them to this day.

In April, 1816, Longman printed for Wordsworth "A Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns, occasioned by an intended republication of the Account of the Life of Burns, by Dr. Currie; and of the Selection made by him from his Letters." It is a pamphlet of thirty-seven pages, in the form of a letter addressed to James Gray, Esq., of Edinburgh, dated January, 1816, and in fact was originally a private communication, although the possibility of its being made public was in the writer's mind from the first. He hoped to dissuade Gilbert Burns from republishing Dr. Currie's "Life" of his brother, and to encourage him to write a short sketch himself instead. In expressing his indignation and sorrow at the defamation of Burns's character in Dr. Currie's indiscreet revelations and puritanical comments, he breaks into a strain of eloquence, which is simpler and more touching than anything else in his prose works. By the delicacy and yet the manly frankness of all his references to Burns's failings, by his exquisitely chosen terms of praise for Burns's genius and the noble elements of his character, by avoiding the use of

those trite and blundering excuses which are an insult to Burns's memory, he shows in every line how he reverenced his brother poet.

Strange to say, some of the Scotch were displeased that an English author should have praised their great poet. A lively controversy arose, of which a specimen from *Blackwood's Magazine* for November, 1817, exhibits the notion of Wordsworth then held by many persons. He is spoken of as " a retired, pensive, egotistical *collector of stamps*, one who has no notion of that merry, hearty life that Burns delighted in."

" How," he exclaims, " can a melancholy, sighing, half-parson sort of gentleman, who lives in a small circle of old maids and sonneteers, and drinks tea now and then with the solemn Laureate, have any sympathy with the free and jolly dispositions of one who spent his evenings in drinking whisky punch at mason lodges with Matthew Henderson and David Lapraik ?"

The strange poem " Dion " was written in 1816. It is not at all in any " manner " shown elsewhere by Wordsworth, and would probably never have been recognized as his if it had been published anonymously. It does not, like " Laodamia," recall the spirit of Greek religion or the Greek conception of beauty. Rather does it remind one of the noble and austere English poets who, we know, were his favourite reading—of Drayton and Daniel and Marvell. He found his subject in Plutarch, but his language is like theirs, less warm and sensuous than Milton's, harder to the ear than Spenser's, and in no wise that of even the most exalted " common " speech. There are at least two serious organic faults in the poem: Dion's crime is not clearly related or sufficiently emphasized; and the introduction of his vision, while necessarily sudden, makes too abrupt a transition from the general to the specific. That Wordsworth at this time, when he elsewhere manifests no misgivings as to the righteousness of the military life in itself, should have written this negative comment on his " Character of the Happy Warrior," proves that his

principles were still not quite set in their new mould. Perhaps this moral difficulty was one cause of the obscurity that remains in this poem notwithstanding his extremely careful revision of the manuscript and the printed editions. Its haunting mystery is due less to its verbal darkness than to its troubled moral atmosphere. The essence of the whole poem is in the last three lines, which may be taken as Wordsworth's final comment on the behaviour of those enthusiasts of the Revolution who committed acts of violence on the principle that the end justified the means:

> Him only pleasure leads and peace attends,
> Him, only him, the shield of Jove defends,
> Whose means are fair and spotless as his ends.

We learn from Robinson's Diary, May 28, 1816, that Godwin, arch disturber of the complacent, had lately spent a night at Wordsworth's house, and seemed to have left him "with feelings of strong political difference." "It was this alone, I believe," he adds, "which kept them aloof from each other." Robinson himself, that comfortable and accommodating soul, says, "I have learned to bear with the intolerance of others when I understand it." He too had rejoiced in the overthrow of Napoleon, because he believed him to be an enemy of liberty, but now he perceived that with the restoration of the old system, the old cares and anxieties had revived also.

"I am sorry," he writes, "that Wordsworth cannot change with the times. He ought, I think, now to exhort our Government to economy, and to represent the dangers of a thoughtless return to all that was in existence twenty-five years ago. Of the integrity of Wordsworth I have no doubt, and of his genius I have an unbounded admiration, but I doubt the discretion and wisdom of his latest political writings."

Robinson mentions that Wordsworth, his wife, and Miss Hutchinson were in London in December, 1817. He met them at a dinner at which Charles Lamb and

Coleridge and his son Hartley were present. The amiable and indefatigable lion-hunter called on them at the Rev. Dr. Christopher Wordsworth's, in Lambeth, and "spent a couple of hours with them very agreeably." The poet had brought manuscripts of new poems with him and was inclined to print one or two small volumes. On December 30, Robinson spent the evening at Lamb's, where he "found a large party collected round the two poets, but Coleridge had the larger number." Hazlitt was not alone in charging Wordsworth with deserting the principles of his younger days, and doubtless there was much controversy on this topic. The attitude of Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth was the more noticeable because of its contrast with the outspoken radicalism of Byron and Shelley. On November 6, Robinson had written:

"I went to Godwin's. Mr. Shelley was there. His youth, and a resemblance to Southey, particularly in his voice, raised a pleasing impression, which was not altogether destroyed by his conversation, though it is vehement, and arrogant, and intolerant. He was very abusive towards Southey, whom he spoke of as having sold himself to the Court. And this he maintained with the usual party slang. His pension and his Laureateship, his early zeal and his recent virulence, are the proofs of gross corruption. On every topic but that of violent party feeling, the friends of Southey are under no difficulty in defending him. Shelley spoke of Wordsworth with less bitterness, but with an insinuation of his insincerity."

It was probably much more than an insinuation, for Shelley had not hesitated, in a sonnet "To Wordsworth," published with "Alastor," in 1816, to make the charge in plain terms. In his journals for 1814 and 1815, he recorded the fact that he had read "The Excursion." Whether the disapproval expressed in the sonnet was due to anything he found in that poem, or merely to the talk against Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey in Leigh Hunt's circle, can only be guessed. The sonnet is as follows:

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar;
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

On December 28, 1817, the artist Haydon gave a dinner, to which, as Keats wished to know Wordsworth, both the poets were invited, besides Charles Lamb and Monkhouse, a kinsman of Mrs. Wordsworth. After dinner other friends came in, and probably it was as gay an evening as Wordsworth ever spent. The following extracts are from Haydon's account:

"On December 28th the immortal dinner came off in my painting room, with Jerusalem* towering up above us as a background. Wordsworth was in fine cue, and we had a glorious set-to,—on Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Virgil. Lamb got exceedingly merry and exquisitely witty; and his fun in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion. He made a speech and voted me absent, and made them drink my health. 'Now,' said Lamb, 'you old lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?' We all defended Wordsworth, and affirmed there was a state of mind when Voltaire would be dull. 'Well,' said Lamb, 'here's Voltaire—the Messiah of the French nation, and a very proper one too.' . . . In the morning of this delightful day, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called on me. He said he knew my friends, had an enthusiasm for Wordsworth, and begged I would procure him the happiness of an introduction.

* Haydon's picture of Christ's Entrance into Jerusalem. Wordsworth and Keats had sat as models for minor figures in this large painting. Hazlitt, Voltaire, and Sir Isaac Newton were also represented. The painting is now in the Art Museum, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

He told me he was a comptroller of stamps, and often had correspondence with the poet. I thought it a liberty; but still, as he seemed a gentleman, I told him he might come."

After telling of the unseemly and rather cruel sport they made of this poor fellow, who was out of his element, Haydon continues:

" It was indeed an immortal evening. Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats's eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour, so speeded the stream of conversation, that in my life I never passed a more delightful time. All our fun was within bounds. Not a word passed that an apostle might not have listened to. It was a night worthy of the Elizabethan age, and my solemn Jerusalem flashing up by the flame of the fire, with Christ hanging over us like a vision, all made up a picture which will long glow upon

> that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude."

The commissioner of stamps was named Kingston. One would suppose from Haydon's gossiping account that poets were quite out of this man's line. But he is mentioned more than once in Keats's letters, and appears to have belonged to the coterie of wits which included the authors of " Rejected Addresses." Though in the distribution of stamps he was no doubt a very important person, Keats called him a " thing." In spite of its unhappy beginning, Wordsworth and Kingston kept up their acquaintance, for Keats says, in a letter of January 5, 1818: " On Saturday I called on Wordsworth before he went to Kingston's, and was surprised to find him with a stiff collar. I saw his spouse, and I think his daughter." Dilke, in his annotated copy of Lord Houghton's " Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats," says: " When Keats first called on Wordsworth he was kept waiting for a long time, and when Wordsworth entered he was in full flower; knee-breeches, silk stockings, etc., and in a great hurry as he

was going to dine with one of the Commissioners of Stamps."

By far the most notable event in 1817, as far as Wordsworth is concerned, was the publication of Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria." This occurred about March. The book, as a whole, is an incomplete medley of several compositions, but its outstanding feature, and that which gives it a unique place among Coleridge's prose works, is the famous discussion of Wordsworth's poems and their underlying principles. Not only is it an impassioned and most eloquent example of English criticism, but there never has been a more subtle, or, I venture to say, a more philosophical treatise on poetry. Nor in the annals of literature is there record of one great author doing more to establish the fame of another, than Coleridge here did to establish Wordsworth's fame; for the profit of all the depth, fineness, and beauty of this treatise falls at Wordsworth's feet. He is the example cited; he is the beneficiary of the interest created. In writing as he did, Coleridge effaced himself, forgot that he too was a poet, refused to claim even his share of the credit for plans and methods which he and Wordsworth had worked out together. Yet one looks in vain through Wordsworth's letters and the many conversations with him that are on record, for any sign that he appreciated either the tribute paid to his genius or the intrinsic merit of Coleridge's performance. Even when Hazlitt, in *The Edinburgh Review* for August, 1817, made a fierce attack upon the book, and *Blackwood's Magazine* for October followed with another equally hostile and more atrociously personal, Wordsworth, so far as is known, gave no sign.

A word dropped by Dorothy, on another subject, shows perhaps that her brother did not quite relish the "Biographia Literaria." Writing to Mrs. Clarkson on April 13, in reference to Coleridge's defence of Southey against the charge of apostasy, she says: "Coleridge, for instance, has taken up the cudgels; and of injudicious defenders he is surely the master leader. . . . He does

nothing in simplicity, and his praise is to me quite disgusting—his praise of the 'man' Southey in contradistinction to the 'boy' who wrote 'Wat Tyler.'"

We might indulge the hope that this unpleasant passage was only an expression of temporary petulance were it not for the following passage in Coleridge's letter of December 2, 1818, to Thomas Allsop:

"I have loved with enthusiastic self-oblivion those who have been so well pleased that I should, year after year, flow with a hundred nameless rills into *their* main stream, that they could find nothing but cold praise and effective discouragement of every attempt of mine to roll onward in a distinct current of my own; who *admitted* that the 'Ancient Mariner,' the 'Christabel,' the 'Remorse,' and some pages of *The Friend* were not without merit, but were abundantly anxious to acquit their judgments of any blindness to the very numerous defects. Yet they *knew* that to *praise*, as mere praise, I was characteristically, almost constitutionally, indifferent. In sympathy alone I found at once nourishment and stimulus; and for sympathy *alone* did my heart crave. They knew, too, how long and faithfully I had acted on the maxim never to admit the *faults* of a work of genius to those who denied or were incapable of feeling and understanding the *beauties*; not from wilful partiality, but as well knowing that in *saying* truth I should, to such critics, convey falsehood. If in one instance, in my literary life, I have appeared to deviate from this rule, first, it was not till the fame of the writer (which I had been for fourteen years successively toiling like a second Ali to build up) had been established; and, secondly, and chiefly with the purpose and, I may safely add, with the effect of rescuing the necessary task from malignant defamers, and in order to set forth the excellences and the trifling proportion which the defects bore to the excellences."

Those who think of Wordsworth only as a serene intelligence, indulging himself, aloof from worldly cares, in the enjoyment of "nature" and the contemplation of ideals, will be relieved, or shocked, according to their notion of propriety, by discovering that for at least one whole year, 1818, he was engaged in practical

politics. Moreover, some of the work he performed was rather elementary and, to a modern judgment, reprehensible—namely, manipulating the local franchise so as to increase his party's vote. He served, in fact, as Lord Lonsdale's lieutenant, which the following extracts from letters will show. The first is to his lordship, under date of February 18:

"I wish much for your opinion as to the propriety of precautionary measures in augmenting the numbers of trustworthy freeholders. An offer has been made to me of an estate which would divide into *twelve* small freeholds; and, with your Lordship's sanction, I would purchase it, being able to reckon on as many persons—gentlemen, my friends, and relations—who could be depended upon. If it be found that your adversaries adopt the plan of increasing the numbers in their interest, it will be necessary to keep pace with them, and I don't think that the matter can be safely left to casualties."

This is what would be termed nowadays "pernicious activity" in an office-holder. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how the "plan" differs from a proposal to buy votes. The familiar defence is made—namely, that the other side is busy too, and that the eleven new votes would be of the "right kind." Whether with the earl's money or his own, we are not told, he carried out his scheme in part, and writes to a correspondent on December 8:

"Our opponents are very active in procuring freeholds, so much so that we must exert ourselves with the view of preserving the balance. This necessity is much to be regretted,—but it to me is so obvious that I purchased the other day a freehold estate in Langdale, which will divide into seven parts. Of these five are already disposed of, one to Mr. Gee, and the other four to my own relations."

Again he says:

"What else but the stability and might of a large estate, with proportional influence in the House of Commons, can counterbalance the democratic activity of the wealthy, commercial, and manufacturing dis-

tricts ? It appears to a superficial observer, warm from contemplating the theory of the Constitution, that the political power of the great landholders ought, by every true lover of his country, to be strenuously resisted; but I would ask a well-intentioned native of Westmorland or Cumberland, who had fallen into this mistake, if he could point to any arrangement by which Jacobinism can be frustrated except by the existence of large estates continued from generation to generation in particular families and parliamentary power in proportion."

The house of Lowther had long held both seats in Parliament for the county of Westmorland. The idea of contesting them had scarcely entered anybody's head. The Tory candidate in 1818 was William Lowther, eldest son of Wordsworth's patron, the second Earl of Lonsdale. To the disgust and scandal of the gentry, the magistracy, and the clergy of that very conservative region, the Whigs set up Henry Brougham, most versatile of politicians, and a man wholly unmindful of other people's prejudices. He had already made a name for himself in the House of Commons, and had been charged, in the recent session, with advocating freedom of suffrage for all payers of direct taxes, and Annual Parliaments. He was, therefore, a dangerous man. Wordsworth's pen was engaged to overthrow this champion of pernicious doctrine. Gratitude towards the Lowther family and a sense of dependence upon persons so powerful to affect his well-being and that of his children, together with knowledge that Brougham had for many years been one of the leading spirits in *The Edinburgh Review*, may have entered into Wordsworth's motives. But the principles he expressed were, of course, his own, acquired by severe thinking and held in a grip of iron. It was his original intention to contribute a series of letters to the Kendal *Chronicle*, and he did, indeed, have one letter printed in that newspaper. Another appeared in the Carlisle *Patriot*. Dissatisfied with this mode of publication, he put forth, at Kendal, a pamphlet of seventy-eight pages entitled " Two Addresses to the Freeholders of West-

morland." What had appeared in the *Chronicle* and the *Patriot* was here repeated and developed.

Stripped of all temporary and local accidents, his argument is that of those, everywhere and in all times, who defend the " machine," the " boss," and " things as they are " in politics. The resemblance deepens when he breaks into an invective against Reformers: " The independence which they boast of despises habit and time-honoured forms of subordination; it consists in breaking old ties upon new temptations; in casting off the modest garb of private obligation to strut about in the glittering armour of public virtue; in sacrificing, with jacobinical infatuation, the near to the remote, and preferring to what has been known and tried, that which has no distinct existence, even in imagination; in renouncing, with voluble tongue and vain heart, everything intricate in motive and mixed in quality; in a downright passion for love of absolute, unapproachable patriotism !" Familiar, too, is the depreciation of talent in politics: " Talent," this invective continues, " is apt to generate presumption and self-confidence; and no qualities are so necessary, in a Legislator, as the opposites of these—which, if they do not imply the existence of sagacity, are the best substitutes for it—whether they produce, in the general disposition of the mind, an humble reliance on the wisdom of our Forefathers, and a sedate yielding to the pressure of existing things, or carry the thoughts still higher, to religious trust in a superintending Providence, by whose permission laws are ordained and customs established, for other purposes than to be perpetually found fault with." It is to be apprehended that if Wordsworth's detractors had noticed that curious phrase, " a sedate yielding to the pressure of existing things," they would have given it wider currency than the limits of Westmorland.

Besides these crudities of prejudice and party feeling, two strong lines of conviction run through the addresses. They have great significance in a study of Wordsworth's life. The two lines are parallel, though one was generated by the other. He believes that the Revo-

lutionary doctrines have been proved false, and that England, if she yields an inch to the urgency of reformers, will be letting in "*the Vanguard of a Ferocious Revolution.*"

Relentless to his own past, he exclaims: "Remember what England might have been with an Administration countenancing French Doctrines at the dawn of the French Revolution, and suffering them, as it advanced, to be sown with every wind that came across the Channel!" Does he forget his own plea that the French Revolution would not have turned into despotism had France been free from the terror of invasion?

One of the ground-principles of the Revolution was that persons, not property, should be the first concern of government. This principle Wordsworth in his youth accepted, but now repudiates. In support of his present view he makes the following summary of civil history, which is far more perverse and contrary to fact than any dogmatic claim ever put forth by Rousseau: "Knowing that there could be no *absolute* guarantee for integrity, and that there was no *certain* test of discretion and knowledge, for bodies of men, the prudence of former times turned to the best substitute human nature would admit of, and civil society furnished. This was property." On this ground he appeals to his readers to support the Lowther candidate.

Keats passed through Rydal in June, on his joyous northern tour, and called on Wordsworth, who was not at home. Lord Houghton says: "His disappointment at missing Wordsworth was very great, and he hardly concealed his vexation when he found that he owed the privation to the interest which the elder poet was taking in the general Election. This annoyance would perhaps have been diminished if the two poets had happened to be on the same side in politics, but, as it was, no views and objects could be more opposed." Keats respected Wordsworth's genius. His first reference to him is in the sonnet, "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning," written in 1816. And writing of

this to Haydon, November 20, 1816, he says: "The Idea of your sending it to Wordsworth put me out of breath—you know with what Reverence I would send my well-wishes to him." It was in reviewing Keats's "Poems," in *The Examiner*, that Leigh Hunt declared Wordsworth "the successor of the true and abundant poets of the older time." On January 10, 1818, Keats writes: "I have seen Wordsworth frequently. Dined with him last Monday." On January 23, he says: "I have seen a great deal of Wordsworth." This is the letter in which he tells of receiving a lock of Milton's hair from Hunt. The latter in one of his sonnets inspired by this occasion, alludes unmistakably to Wordsworth, when he says:

> I'll wear it, but as my inherited due,
> (For there is one, whom had he kept his art
> For Freedom still, nor left her for the crew
> Of lucky slaves in his misgiving heart,
> I would have begged thy leave to give it to)
> Yet not without some claims, though far apart.

It is quite evident from the tone of Keats's reference to Wordsworth that he did not reverence his character, partly for the reason implied in Hunt's lines, partly because he thought him egotistical.

For example, writing to his brothers, February 21, 1818, he says: "I am sorry that Wordsworth has left a bad impression wherever he visited in town by his egotism, vanity, and bigotry. Yet he is a great poet if not a philosopher."

It was, we may be sure, in a gay, vivacious mood, and with no intention of depreciating Wordsworth, that Keats had written to Reynolds, in February:

"It may be said that we ought to read our contemporaries, that Wordsworth, etc., should have their due from us. But, for the sake of a few fine imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain Philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist? Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false

coinage, and deceives himself. Many a man can travel to the very bourne of Heaven, and yet want confidence to put down his half-seeing. Sancho will invent a journey heavenward as well as anybody. We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us, and, if we do not agree, seems to put its hand into its breeches pocket. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle or amaze it with itself, but with its subject."

He continues in this high-flying style for some space, at Wordsworth's expense, but his more sober judgment rules in another letter to Reynolds, of May 3, in which he compares Wordsworth with Milton. In explaining the dark passages of life, and " in thinking into the human heart," he finds Wordsworth superior. Among the books in the Rydal Mount library was a copy of Keats's " Poems," 1817, with the words " To W. Wordsworth, with the Author's sincere reverence," written on the title-page.

To have done with Keats's references to Wordsworth, which nearly all centre about this time, we have only to note that in some doggerel verses called " The Gadfly," in which one of the Lowthers is ridiculed, verses written July 17 and sent to his brother Tom, Wordsworth's name occurs, and once he speaks of " the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime." Young as he was, Keats's eye for character was keen. He formed his opinions with manly independence. One is at first disposed to give weight to his high estimate of Wordsworth's poetry and deny it to the rather disparaging view he took of his character, but everyone who has carefully read Keats's letters must perceive that the purity of his heart and the freshness and vigour of his intellect made him a man whose moral judgments were exceptionally sound. He rarely passed censure on anyone.

Shelley's condemnation, uttered at about the same time, need not be taken so seriously. He did not know Wordsworth, and his political bias was stronger even than Keats's. He wrote:

"The news of the result of the elections, especially that of the metropolis, is highly inspiring. I received a letter, of two days' later date, with yours, which announced the unfortunate termination of that of Westmorland. I wish you had sent me some of the overflowing villainy of those apostates: What a beastly and pitiful wretch that Wordsworth! That such a man should be such a poet! I can compare him with no one but Simonides, that flatterer of the Sicilian tyrants, and at the same time the most natural and tender of lyric poets."

Passing gladly from Wordsworth's adventures in the political field, which show to what extremity of opinion and intemperance of language a high-strung novice may be wrought, we turn for relief to his poems of that year, 1818. But here disappointment awaits us, and we are reminded of the mysterious connection which we have already more than once remarked between his views of society and the quality of his verse. So long as he trusted human nature and was concerned for men as men, so long as his outlook was hopeful, catholic, and democratic, his poetry retained its touching simplicity and that reverent realism from which the mind could spring to infinite spiritual heights. I am far from affirming that in an aristocratic theory of history collateral support for a great poet's labours might not be found. But the fact is that in Wordsworth's case, poetic genius failed in curiously exact proportion as he passed from a liberal to a narrow estimate of human rights. Lord Morley's remark that "Wordsworth, who clung fervently to the historic foundations of society as it stands, was wholly indifferent to history," seems to me quite misleading. I can think of no poet who was more attentive to history and more agitated by what he deemed its lessons. Not the shows, the colour, the sentiments of history, but its effect on human welfare, interested him. To employ a simple, though improper, analysis, we might say that he viewed history as a moralist rather than as an artist. Of the period in his life which we have now reached, and all that follows, Lord Morley's other statement is true,—Wordsworth

" clung fervently to the foundations of society " as it stood; but of the earlier and more glorious and productive period, the very contrary must be said.

The poems, so far as is known, which Wordsworth wrote in 1818 are " The Pilgrim's Dream, or the Star and the Glow-worm," five Inscriptions supposed to be found in and near a Hermit's Cell, and the " Evening Voluntary, composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty." In his earlier and better period, those poems which were not merely the spontaneous utterance of joyous emotion were composed through one of two processes. Sometimes a simple, natural event or object suddenly detached itself in his mind from its surroundings and appealed to him through that constant, universal, and inherent interestingness of which the world is full. When the beauty or the pathos of the thing itself was obvious, he was content merely to let nature be her own interpreter. For example, he drew no moral from " Alice Fell." When a moral was inferred, as in the last stanza of " Simon Lee ":

> I've heard of hearts unkind, good deeds
> With coldness still returning;
> Alas ! the gratitude of men
> Hath oftener left me mourning,

it is generally as simple and natural as the instance which suggested it, and for that reason sometimes all the more startling. Or, by a different process, a great moral truth, important to all men and a part of all men's experience, took possession of his mind and dwelt there, with accessories, analogies, and associations, till it had absorbed their essences. Then it grew clear again, but with more body and strength, like wine. The " Ode to Duty " would seem to have had such a genesis.

The poems written in 1818, on the contrary, are based on rare occurrences, or on forced and peculiar fancies. They are deliberately didactic and obtrusively sententious. And like poetry of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, they abound in personifications and other artificial devices. No longer content with the

religious feeling supplied by nature and by human experience, the poet invokes again and again the agency of angels and seraphs. What kind of truth, moral, historical, scientific, or poetic, we ask ourselves, is preserved in the lines:

> Time was when field and watery cove
> With modulated echoes rang,
> While choirs of fervent angels sang
> Their vespers in the grove ?

What grove, what field? we wonder; and how could Wordsworth have written "watery cove"? There are many lovers of poetry who find fault with pieces like "The Thorn," with its "little muddy pond," but this is at least Wordsworth. Any poor poet, with a defective ear and a reluctance to call things by their names, might have written the first stanza of the "Second Inscription":

> Pause, Traveller ! whosoe'er thou be
> Whom chance may lead to this retreat,
> Where silence yields reluctantly
> Even to the fleecy straggler's bleat."

And, in the "Evening Voluntary," the verse

> Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve !

cannot but leave us grieving.

As a seal and sign of social rank, and in recognition of his services to the Tory party, Wordsworth was appointed Justice of the Peace, towards the end of the year 1818.

On October 3, 1819, Mrs. Coleridge writes, rather pettishly, to Poole: "The Wordsworths are quite in request. You have no notion how much respectability attaches to them. Their society is much courted." This letter also contains a reference to the Pantisocratic adventure: "In the literary gazette there was a full account of our juvenile American scheme, and that Mrs. Fricker and Mrs. Southey had consented to go with the young people in their wild scheme of colonization."

The fatal narrowing of Wordsworth's outlook is shown

by his amazing statement to Wrangham: "Except now and then, when Southey accommodates me, I see no new books whatever." Yet these were the years of "Alastor," "The Revolt of Islam," "Endymion," "Manfred," the third and fourth cantos of "Childe Harold," "Rob Roy," "The Heart of Midlothian"—one hardly knows where to stop, for when were there ever three richer years than those that had just passed? When could a man have missed more by reading "no new books whatever"? The remark implies contempt. It is stupid and vain. There is no real excuse in his further statement: "My reading powers were never very great, and now they are much diminished, especially by candle-light. And as to buying books, I can affirm that on *new* books I have not spent five shillings for the last five years. I include reviews, magazines, pamphlets, etc., etc." This is mere intellectual priggishness. The time of life had come, as he very well knew, when he could no longer draw upon the fresh sensuous impressions of youth. He had uttered the word of individual moral insight which it is given to some souls to have once, and usually no more than once. He had now reached the age when, if a man is to keep alive and not be a dead-weight upon society, he must love more and listen more, read more and concede more, than youth required or the active energy of early middle life allowed. This was no time for withdrawal from the world. Had he read new books, and sought the society of their authors, had he admitted the value of novel ideas and humbly tried to sympathize with them, the last thirty or thirty-five years of his life would have been freer from that self-complacency which, when disturbed, produced an irritable temper and a panic fear of change.

CHAPTER XXIV

FAME AND FAVOUR

That Wordsworth had not altogether abandoned the principles upon which his best poems were composed is shown by his publishing "Peter Bell," a tale in verse, in the spring of 1819. It was printed for Longman, with an engraving of a picture painted by Sir George Beaumont expressly for this purpose. In the dedication, to Southey, Poet Laureate, Wordsworth says, "pains have been taken at different times," during the long interval since the poem first saw the light, in 1798, "to make the production less unworthy of a favourable reception; or, rather, to fit it for filling *permanently* a station, however humble, in the Literature of my Country." There is something admirable in the courage which enabled a man to hold his head so high when London was calling unto Edinburgh in ridicule of his self-conceit. The poem, he says, "was composed under a belief that the Imagination not only does not require for its exercise the intervention of supernatural agency, but that, though such agency be excluded, the faculty may be called forth as imperiously and for kindred results of pleasure, by incidents, within the compass of poetic probability, in the humblest departments of daily life."

It will probably never be known how much of "Peter Bell" really belongs to the period of "Lyrical Ballads," and how much, as it was printed twenty-one years later, is due to picking and patching. The original *motif* was the same as that of the "Ancient Mariner." A hard-hearted, wayward man is arrested and touched by nature. In the "Ancient Mariner," nature unfolds her extraordinary powers; she shows a face of terror. In "Peter Bell" it is the "blue and grey, and tender green," of a mild night, it is a "soft and fertile nook,"

a " silent stream," that creep into the soul. In each poem human dulness and cruelty are rebuked by a lesson drawn from the suffering of an inferior animal. In each an effort is made to produce a sense of awe. In each a ballad measure is used, and we also find those unexpected leaps from the trivial to the sublimely impressive which occur in the best ballads. Where the planning of the two poems differs most is that whereas Coleridge meant to make preternatural events seem real by the use of simple language and natural detail, Wordsworth meant to invest natural events with the glamour which usually accompanies accounts of the preternatural. I do not know why Wordsworth's production was withheld from " Lyrical Ballads." In its original form it probably would have stood comparison with " The Rime of the Ancient Mariner " better than it does now. There was probably no attempt at humour in it then. Wordsworth appears to have been afraid that its stark simplicity and realism would provoke ridicule, and therefore to have given to it, especially in the introductory stanzas, those awkward touches of facetiousness which sadly impair its unity of tone. In her Grasmere Journal, on February 20, 1802, Dorothy says, " I wrote the first part of ' Peter Bell.' " The next day she adds, " I wrote the second prologue to ' Peter Bell.' . . . After dinner I wrote the first prologue." She means of course that she was copying. Internal evidence points to the conclusion that the first prologue was shorter than the second, and perhaps contained no more than these three exquisite stanzas:

Long have I loved what I behold,
The night that calms, the day that cheers;
The common growth of mother earth
Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
Her humblest mirth and tears.

The dragon's wing, the magic ring,
I shall not covet for my dower,
If I along that lowly way
With sympathetic heart may stray,
And with a soul of power.

These given, what more need I desire
To stir, to soothe, or elevate ?
What nobler marvels than the mind
May in life's daily prospect find,
May find or these create ?

These lines contain Wordsworth's æsthetic creed in 1798, and come as near being a statement of his religious faith and moral system at that time as anything we possess. It is a pity he felt obliged to surround them with thirty-five prolix and uncharacteristically playful stanzas, however charming some of these may be. We know from his own admission, though internal evidence would have sufficed, that the following stanzas were not in the poem as originally written:

'Tis said that through prevailing grace
He not unmoved did notice now
The cross upon thy shoulder scored,
Meek beast, in memory of the Lord
To whom all human kind shall bow;

In memory of that solemn day
When Jesus humbly deigned to ride,
Entering the proud Jerusalem,
By an immeasurable stream
Of shouting people deified.

The apostrophe to the "meek Beast," the double negative "not unmoved," the long adjective "immeasurable," the inversion in the last line—are marks of Wordsworth's later manner. Moreover, in 1798, he would, I think, have shrunk from anything that might have looked like an acknowledgment of Christianity. These stanzas were omitted in the edition of 1827, as though Wordsworth felt that they did not harmonize with the context. He altered and restored them later. Apparently he realized not only that confusion of motives was a blemish, but that the admixture of humour was ill-timed and awkward, for he also withdrew a stanza which had a satirical turn. The reason he offered, however, was that the "profanity" gave

offence to some overscrupulous person. The stanza ran thus:

> Is it a party in a parlour ?
> Cramm'd just as they on earth were cramm'd—
> Some slipping punch, some sipping tea,
> But, as you by their faces see,
> All silent and all damn'd !

It was the crude simplicities, not the overrefinement of the poem, that shocked most readers. Even friendly and tolerant Crabb Robinson was disturbed. He wrote in his Diary, May 3, 1819: " Barnes attacked me about ' Peter Bell,' but this is a storm I must yield to. Wordsworth has set himself back ten years by the publication of this work." Curiously enough, the reviewer in *Blackwood's* was more lenient, and urged little objection against the " commonness " of the poem, though finding fault with its " dallying prolixity," an accurately descriptive phrase.

But how all these objections fall into their proper perspective as secondary things, when we read in Coleridge's notebook his unhesitating opinion: " Wordsworth's most wonderful and admirable poem ' Peter Bell.' " !

If the poem in any shape had appeared in " Lyrical Ballads," with its companions, it would have been even more ridiculed than they were. Coming out in 1819, it had a large sale, as compared with Wordsworth's previous publications, and a fairly respectful reception. Readers by this time knew what to look for in Wordsworth; and in " Peter Bell " there is much that is touching, much that is beautiful. The several bits of landscape are exquisitely composed, and the artist has more colours on his palette than usual. The Ass is made almost humanly pathetic. Peter is no mean example of dramatic creation. The feeling is imparted that external nature is in league with the moral world. To do this is surely one of the great objects of poetry.

Two parodies on " Peter Bell " bear the date 1819. Their writer or writers showed a cruel knowledge of

the foibles of Wordsworth's character, and, moreover, seized very cleverly upon the features in his poetry which lend themselves to this kind of perversion. One is entitled "The Dead Asses, A Lyrical Ballad," and was printed for Smith and Elder. The other and far cleverer burlesque is called "Peter Bell, a Lyrical Ballad," and was printed for Taylor and Hessey. The latter in its preface and footnotes and Supplementary Essay mocks quite amusingly the clumsy and naive way in which Wordsworth was accustomed to load his volumes with critical remarks, excellent in themselves, but out of place, and with trivial comments on particular poems. It was written by John Hamilton Reynolds, and appeared in April, a few days *before* Wordsworth's poem. This dishonest production reached Shelley at Leghorn, and, according to Mrs. Shelley, amused him exceedingly. He also read Leigh Hunt's review of both the real and the spurious poem, in *The Examiner* for April 26 and May 3. In October he wrote his "Peter Bell the Third," beginning in great good-humour, but soon breaking into a strain of caustic satire. He must have had private information of the fact that Reynolds's book had been printed before its "original," for he calls it "the antenatal Peter." I find nothing in Shelley's "Peter Bell" to indicate that he had read more of Wordsworth's than what was quoted in *The Examiner*. "Peter Bell the Third" is not a parody. It is a grotesque development of the idea that Wordsworth had bartered away his soul. He is the third Peter Bell. And who, we may ask, is the Devil to whom he sells himself, and at whose table he serves? The Devil's house stands in Grosvenor Square, from which we may infer that the Beaumonts or the Lowthers were meant. Shelley's real complaint against Wordsworth is that he has gone over to the enemy—that is, to the Tory party. He draws the very true inference that he has therefore grown dull. All further hints and shadows of hints in this wild burlesque may be dismissed as sheer fancy. The best stanzas are those about Coleridge, in Part the Fifth; some of them have

a tragic depth unusual in any but the greatest satire, as, for example:

> He was a mighty poet—and
> A subtle-souled psychologist;
> All things he seemed to understand,
> Of old or new—of sea or land—
> But his own mind—which was a mist.
>
> This was a man who might have turned
> Hell into Heaven—and so in gladness
> A Heaven unto himself have earned;
> But he in shadows undiscerned
> Trusted—and damned himself to madness.

Mrs. Shelley was entirely too conciliatory when she declared, in her Note on "Peter Bell the Third," that nothing personal to Wordsworth was intended in this poem, that it was purely ideal, a criticism of his compositions. It has, on the contrary, not much to say, against Wordsworth's works, which Shelley admired, and a great deal to say against his choosing his friends among the rich and powerful. We infer, to be sure, that Shelley had found "The Excursion" dull and took for granted that "Peter Bell" was dull too. He had never met either Wordsworth or Coleridge. His motive was entirely personal, in one sense, though without spite or jealousy. The Manchester massacre had occurred in August, and the Yorkshire bread riots in October. He was burning with indignation against all persons who, like Wordsworth, upheld the cause of "order" at the expense, as he conceived, of justice and mercy. He made fun of "Peter Bell" for no other reason than because he deemed its author a renegade.

A short time after "Peter Bell," in the summer, Longman brought out another slim volume of verse, entitled "The Waggoner, a Poem, to which are added Sonnets, by William Wordsworth." The Dedication is to Charles Lamb.

During the winter evenings of 1819 Wordsworth made an anthology of his favourite passages from poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which he dictated to Sara Hutchinson. In her neat handwriting, and

preceded with a pen-and-ink portrait of Wordsworth and an original sonnet, they made a beautiful volume, which was given to the Lady Mary Lowther, daughter of the Earl of Lonsdale, as a Christmas present. About a third of the extracts are from Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, of whom Wordsworth wrote, in his Essay Supplementary to the Preface, 1815: "Now it is remarkable that, excepting a passage or two in the Windsor Forest of Pope, and some delightful pictures in the Poems of Lady Winchelsea, the Poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the Paradise Lost and the Seasons does not contain a single new image of external nature; and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination."

In the spring of 1820 Longman published, uniform with the two other volumes of that year, "The River Duddon, a series of Sonnets, Vaudracour and Julia, and other Poems, to which is annexed a Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes in the North of England, by William Wordsworth." The book was dedicated to the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth, D.D.

It was a happy thought, originating with Coleridge, to give the poetical history of a stream, from its head-waters among the quiet hills to its place of rest in the sea,

> Where mightiest rivers into powerless sleep
> Sink, and forget their nature.

One who should expect a series of bright and lively pictures, and much variety of colour, or an attempt to delight the ear with musical imitations of waterfalls and softly gliding reaches, would be disappointed in this work. He will find what he wants in Tennyson's "Brook" and "The Lady of Shalott," or in "Sohrab and Rustum." When Dante described the descent of the Arno from savage hills to savage towns, he did not linger to tell of dimpling pools and waving reeds; his curt words were of crime and war and treachery. So

if we have any insight into Wordsworth's character, we shall be prepared to look for few images and many thoughts, few efforts merely to give pleasure, and a constant care to elevate the mind. Somewhat bare and austere these sonnets are, like the bleak hills and stony valleys they celebrate. They keep faith with their subjects, a self-sacrificing loyalty that scorns the specious gains of flattery. Few mountainous regions in old populated countries are so unblessed with legends as the English Lake district. It has virtually no local folk-songs. We can imagine in what a string of ballads Scott would have woven the history of the Tweed. There is almost as little human activity in the upper parts of the Westmorland vales as in the interior of Iceland or Skye; and so we have not in these sonnets the crowded life with which Crabbe filled his scenes. Yet Wordsworth makes the most of his legitimate opportunities, and the solitary farm, the stepping-stones, the small white church, the paths that lose themselves, are all the more touching amid the silence. Measure and artistic restraint, the self-sufficiency of truth, the confidence of reason, dwell at home in the Duddon poems. And at the close, as if to release the pent-up loveliness till then withheld, and the intellectual passion and yearning so long restrained, he gives us the great sonnet which begins:

I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide.

After the publication of the Duddon volume, Wordsworth's life was diversified in three ways—by the issuing of new editions of his works, with an admixture of fresh poems, by journeys on the Continent, to London, and elsewhere, and by ventures in the political field. There were, of course, domestic joys and sorrows, which, however, differed from those of ordinary men only in being perhaps more poignantly felt. They left comparatively few traces in his poetry. He strove, through his remaining years, to be more objective in his work. Few poets had ever found so much of their material and inspiration in their homes, their surroundings, and their friendships;

henceforth his best poems, with here and there a notable exception, such as his sonnet " On the Departure of Sir Walter Scott from Abbotsford for Naples," were to deal with public and historical subjects. At the time of his fiftieth birthday, in April, 1820, he might well have surveyed his past with satisfaction and his prospects for the future with confidence. His place as a great English poet was securely established. His literary career might even then have seemed almost fully rounded out, as indeed it was. His family life was serene. The education of his children was proceeding favourably. His dear sister was as yet in good health, and still the sharer of his highest joys. His brother Christopher was eminent as churchman and scholar. The breach with Coleridge had healed outwardly, though not inwardly. Nearly all the other friendships of his youth and early manhood remained unimpaired. Mathews and Beaupuy were dead, but with Jones and Wrangham he was still on the old footing; with Southey he was neighbourly; toward Sir Walter Scott his affection and respect had increased; the Lambs and the Wordsworths grew closer to one another every year, and a new friend had been found in Crabb Robinson. We are sorry to hear less of Thomas Poole; distance may have had something to do with that. The Clarksons were kind and cheerful as ever. Mr. and Mrs. Marshall, through Dorothy's affection for the latter, had become friends of the family. The Hutchinsons were people of solid worth, and Sara Hutchinson was a useful and beloved member of the Wordsworth family. Mrs. Wordsworth was a good manager, provident, hospitable, and yet able to spare thought and time for aiding her husband in his work. The poet's income was sufficient for the necessities of his household.

Only one cloud cast a shadow over this bright scene—a melancholy fear of political change. His patriotism was historical. He had a high, perhaps an exaggerated conception of England's share in civilizing the world. At least she had, in his opinion, saved Europe. He idealized the institutions which he thought had produced

so much good. They formed a glorious image in his mind. He spoke and wrote of the fabric of the state as if it had been a homogeneous, self-sustaining edifice, with parts so organically related that if one were taken away all would collapse. Every proposed reform, he insisted, should be considered with reference to this danger. Of government as a partnership between living men, the terms and purposes of which might vary from time to time as conditions required, he had apparently no conception. Yet this was the one deep and lasting doctrine announced by the Revolution, adopted even by Napoleon, and beginning, as early as 1820, to reassert its vitality in Liberalism. It was Wordsworth's high privilege as a poet to defend and glorify the works of the spirit as against the works of the flesh. He had idealized the ancient order of life in England. It represented in his eyes spiritual in conflict with material values. This conclusion seemed to him all the more necessary because the tampering which he dreaded began in the shape of material reforms. Thus his idealism, the purity and strength of his imagination, deceived him. And since the reforms were inevitable, he took a gloomy view of the future. His reconciliation with the established religion of his country was due in part to a just view of the alliance existing between religion and poetry as upholders of spiritual against material interests. But it was due also to his sympathy with the false and unfortunate attitude of the Church in opposing reforms. He was attracted by the Church's claim to possess an organic life, just as the State was supposed to be a thing in itself.

On July 10, William, Mary, and Dorothy Wordsworth, with the newly-married Mr. and Mrs. Monkhouse and their sister, Miss Horrocks, relatives of Mrs. Wordsworth, set forth on a Continental tour, from which they returned to London on November 8. They bought a carriage and travelled in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and France. Crabb Robinson joined them at Lucerne. After their return to England Wordsworth composed many poems on subjects suggested during the tour.

The genesis of nearly all these poems was recorded by his wife and his sister. The second volume of "Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals" and the Eversley edition of Wordsworth's Poems contain copious selections from their diaries.

In many instances the poems are no improvement upon the prose narratives. What they gain in brevity, weight, and sententiousness, they lose in simplicity. If they are more musical they are also more stiff and obscure. They were written, as it were, with an iron pen. They make considerable demand upon the intellect, and appeal only slightly to the heart. An attentive reader will be pleased with their echoes from Milton and Waller and other poets, but will discover no fresh images and few haunting cadences. A noble spirit, and a power of pressing ideas out of facts, he will, of course, find.

Crabb Robinson, the Pepys of that generation, fully appreciated his good-fortune in being the travelling companion of the greatest living English poet, and from the time he joined the party his Diary adds to the fullness of the record. But he acknowledged that the two other accounts put his to shame.

Of natural objects those that most impressed the travellers were waterfalls. It had always been so with William and Dorothy. Of historical subjects the favourites were those that commemorated resistance to tyrants—to the Austrians and Napoleon, or Buonaparte, as they insisted on calling him—and shrines and churches in lonely places. They noted the prostrate column of granite which was being dragged to Milan for a triumphal edifice and was left by the roadside when Buonaparte fell, and the pillar at Boulogne left unfinished by "the Corsican."

In a letter to the Earl of Lonsdale, from Paris, Wordsworth remarks: "Nothing which I have seen in this city has interested me at all like the Jardin des Plantes, with the living animals and the Museum of Natural History which it includes. Scarcely could I refrain from tears of admiration at the sight of this apparently boundless exhibition of the wonders of the creation. The statues

and pictures of the Louvre affect me feebly in comparison."

Almost immediately after arriving in Paris the Wordsworths called on Madame Vallon and the Baudouins. As Professor Legouis has informed us in his "William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon," a book in which he has communicated the extremely interesting results of his inquiries into the fate of Annette and her descendants, Wordsworth's daughter Caroline was by 1820 the mother of a little girl. He says: "It is touching to find among the child's names that of the English aunt who had always borne her a touching affection. She was christened Louise Marie Caroline Dorothée." He suggests that her grandfather took her to the Jardin des Plantes to see the animals. M. Legouis and I made a pilgrimage together in 1924 to the grave in which she lies buried with her mother in the cemetery of Père Lachaise. The inscription on the headstone we translated thus: "To the memory of our mother, Anne Caroline William Wordsworth, widow of M. Jean Baptiste Baudouin, formerly sub-director of the Mont de Piété, born December 6, 1792, died in 1862." One of her living descendants has shown me one superbly bound volume of Wordsworth's Poems of 1815 and his portrait in crayon (apparently by Nash, and very closely resembling that belonging to Mrs. Moorsom), and several other mementos, all of which had come down in her family from the time of the visit in 1820.

Robinson, who had been told their story, wrote in his Diary, under date of October 3: "Having breakfasted alone, I repaired to Rue Charlot and was introduced to Mrs. Baudoin, a mild, amiable little woman in appearance. . . . Captain Baudoin accompanied us to the Monkhouses." On October 6 he wrote: "I dined at Mr. Baudouin's, who after dinner accompanied me to the Odéon." On October 7 he wrote: "Walked to see the W's. They were out, but I called and saw Mrs. Valon. We took coffee at the Mille Colonnes." On October 8 he wrote: "Went to Mr. Baudoin's. The W's. were not returned from Versailles. I went

alone to Miss Williams. . . . Went down again to B.'s and saw Miss W." The Wordsworths were living in the rue Charlot, boulevard du Temple.

Dorothy, writing to Mrs. Clarkson, October 14, 1820, from Paris, says: "We have had great satisfaction at Paris in seeing our Friends whom I have mentioned to you. Of this when we meet. Last night we drank tea at Miss Williams'. She is a very sweet woman, and we were much pleased with our visit. I hope we shall go again. We talked much of you." This was Helen Maria Williams, the republican authoress.

The Bishop of Lincoln states in the "Memoirs" that after their return to London the Wordsworths remained there "for the pleasure of seeing Mr. Rogers, Charles Lamb and his sister, the Lloyds, Mr. R. Sharp, Mr. Kenyon, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Talfourd and others." He continues:

"On the 17th and 18th [November] they were with their dear friends at Hampstead Heath (Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Hoare), whence Wordsworth walked to visit Coleridge (in Grove Street, Highgate) on the 18th. On the 23rd, Wordsworth, his wife and his sister, left London for Cambridge, to visit his brother, Dr. Wordsworth, who had been promoted from the rectory of Lambeth to the mastership of Trinity College, in the summer of 1820. They remained his guests till the 6th December, and then proceeded to visit Sir George and Lady Beaumont at Coleorton, where they remained till the 20th; and on Christmas Eve they arrived at Rydal Mount."

Though energy was lacking for a vast creative task like the completion of "The Recluse," the six years from 1821 to 1827 were filled with quiet industry. The now prematurely aged poet was continually revising his earlier work, including "The Prelude." From time to time a visit to London, Coleorton, or Lowther Castle interrupted these labours. Young John Wordsworth, prepared by his father, went to New College, Oxford; young William attended a little school kept by Hartley Coleridge at Ambleside; Dora enjoyed the society of Coleridge's daughter Sara and Southey's daughter

Edith, who were growing up together at Keswick. Gardening, which is a fine art in the Lake country, had turned the grounds of Rydal Mount into a paradise. Literary strangers who passed that way were generally the poet's admirers and therefore heavenly visitants. By shutting out obnoxious magazines and not taking in a daily newspaper, the serpent of radicalism was excluded. Poor Dorothy lamented to Crabb Robinson that she was missing Lamb's "Essays of Elia," which were appearing in *The London Magazine*, a periodical detested by her brother.

There were three great public questions which agitated Wordsworth during the years 1821 and 1822—Parliamentary Reform, Catholic Emancipation, and the liberty of the Press. His painful interest in these matters kept him from working placidly at "The Recluse," and gave a turn to almost all the poetry he found himself now able to compose. For the younger generation of poets he professed unmeasured contempt. We must suppose he included not only Byron, Moore, and Leigh Hunt, but also Shelley and Keats, in the ill-tempered denunciation contained in the following passage from a letter to H. C. Robinson, written in March, 1821: "As to poetry, I am sick of it; it overruns the country in all the shapes of the plagues of Egypt—frog-poets (the croakers), mice-poets (the nibblers), a class rhyming to mice (which shall be nameless), and fly-poets. Gray, in his dignified way, calls flies the 'insect youth,' a term wonderfully applicable upon this occasion. But let us desist, or we shall be accused of envying the rising generation!"

Dr. Johnson wrote of Milton: "It appears in all his writings, that he had the usual concomitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much, and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal, as he set its value high, and considered his mention of a name as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservative from oblivion." Wordsworth, as the course

of his life shows, had not a *real* confidence in himself. He was curiously compounded of timorousness and courage. He was unwilling to take the consequences of the boldest and best acts of his life. He failed to keep steadily in view until the end those glorious purposes which were among the true sources of his greatness. His contempt for other men was due to a stubborn refusal to look into their merits. No one was more sensitive to poetic excellence; few have possessed stronger powers of discrimination. If his praise was scanty, if his judgments were often harsh and narrow, it was because of a moral poverty. There is much truth in what De Quincey remarked, with the venom of mortified vanity, if we are careful to restrict it to the second Wordsworth, who had renounced the things of his brave youth—namely, that he was a spoiled child of Fortune. A man who had been more frequently contradicted and thwarted, who had learned to put up with criticism from kind but unadoring comrades, would have been more tolerant, and, in reference to his own work, would have been less inclined to force the note, and all this without necessarily surrendering any vital position in morals or æsthetics.

Dorothy Wordsworth was anxious that he should employ his time to better purpose, on "The Recluse," and "the poem on his own life." "But the will," she says, "never governs *his* labours." She wishes he had something of Southey's method, and Southey something of his inspiration. From her approval of Southey's wretched "Vision of Judgment," in which he translates George the Third to Heaven, we may fairly conclude that her brother tolerated that piece of sycophancy. Nothing was now too strong for him if it expressed loyalty to the Constitution and the Church of England. From the proposed admission of Roman Catholics to equal political rights, he anticipated a union between them and "other dissenters and infidels" for the overthrow of the Anglican system.

He opposed the abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts. Turning his back on the principles which

governed his better days, he violently denounced the movement to extend the Parliamentary franchise. "When I was young"—he wrote to Lord Londsale, December 4, 1821, "giving myself credit for qualities which I did not possess, and measuring mankind by that standard—I thought it derogatory to human nature to set up property in preference to person, as a title for legislative power. That notion has vanished. I now perceive many advantages in our present complex system of representation, which formerly eluded my observation."

While professing to believe that freedom of the Press was the only safeguard of liberty, he declared that he was *therefore* in favour of vigorous restrictions. Despots and their defenders have seldom reasoned otherwise. He put his theory into practice, so far as his own household was concerned, by prohibiting the entry of current magazines.

Needless to say, Wordsworth's name is absent from the honourable list of those who helped Charles Lamb, in the spring of 1822, to raise a fund for the benefit of poor Godwin, who was in even greater straits than usual, and on the point of having his furniture and books sold. Robinson was down for £30, Byron for nearly the same amount, Lamb himself gave £50 from his own scanty resources, and Sir Walter Scott £10, although his political principles were as opposed to Godwin's as Wordsworth's, and his intellectual debt to Godwin nothing whatever.

Except for one or two visits to Lowther Castle Wordsworth appears to have remained at home the whole of 1821 and 1822. He was laboriously composing his "Memorials of a Tour on the Continent," and also his "Ecclesiastical Sonnets." To trace, by means of a series of sonnets on eminent men and noteworthy events, the history of the Christian Church in England, was an enterprise worthy of a great poet. The idea appears to have been original with Wordsworth, and nobly did he carry it out. He followed, to be sure, what might be termed the central or official tradition; within its limits he made a praiseworthy effort to be generous.

Considering the course of life which he had deliberately adopted, it would be too much to expect that he should recognize such deep spiritual currents as Calvinism, Quakerism, and Methodism. His point of view was that of a high-churchman trying to be moderate, though absolutely incapacitated for taking a really broad and catholic survey. But criticism is less concerned with his limitations as an historian than with the degree on which he succeeded in turning history, or what was supposed to be history, into poetry. And here, I think, he is to be highly praised. Some of the sonnets are pompous, some are mechanical; but a certain number show the hand of a consummate artist moulding into sensuous form lofty and passionately conceived thoughts. The best of all, and one of the finest sonnets in our language, is " Mutability." Then there are the three splendid sonnets on " King's College Chapel, Cambridge," and the sweet tribute to Izaak Walton. The sonnet called " Imaginative Regrets," laboured and harsh though it is, contains the wonderful picture of a desert, with " stalking pillars built of fiery sand." The sonnet on " Old Abbeys " is a plea for an æsthetic and historical reverence for mediæval faith, a more temperate and wholesome plea than many which have been put forth. The sonnet on " Catechizing " touches the heart because of its exquisitely pathetic reference to the poet's mother. Those beginning " As star that shines dependent upon star," and " A genial hearth, a hospitable board," are tranquillizing pictures of the Church as it is and always has been, at the points where it touches the daily lives of men through its rural places of worship and its humane, learned, and devout clergy. By using the sonnet form, the poet was able to rise to these high levels when the subject warmed him. He escaped the danger of seeming to attempt anything like a systematic discourse, and could select without much restraint some of the really inspiring moments and figures of Church history. Where he was caught by the lure of system he failed, as in the sonnets on " Baptism," " Sponsors," and " The Commination Service."

The volume entitled " Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820," was published by Longman early in 1822. It is strange that one of the best sonnets in the book, " Author's Voyage Down the Rhine (Thirty Years Ago)," was never reprinted by Wordsworth. " Ecclesiastical Sketches " was published by Longman probably in the same month as the " Memorials."

There were one hundred and two sonnets in the first edition. Thirty others were added in successive editions of the complete works. Only two other poems are ascribed to the year 1822, both of them composed on seeing the foundation preparing for the erection of Rydal Chapel. They might better have been left unprinted, though as contributions to a local festival they showed good feeling. Too much of Wordsworth's verse, in the last thirty years of his life, was inspired—if the word is permissible in this connection—by a view of nature according to which this vast, mysterious world is nothing more than an object-lesson pointing the way to Heaven. The prevalence of this view among hymn writers is a chief cause of the general failure of their productions, as poems.

Only three poems are known to have been written by Wordsworth in 1823. That entitled " Memory," after six stanzas in a somewhat artificial style, ends with five lines of pure beauty and sincere feeling. Mindful of his own youth, and thinking, as he tells us, of his young friend Hartley Coleridge, upon whom a storm of temptation was beating, he reflects that, if early years are well spent, age may

> steal to his allotted nook
> Contented and serene;
>
> With heart as calm as lakes that sleep,
> In frosty moonlight glistening;
> Or mountain rivers, where they creep
> Along a channel smooth and deep,
> To their own far-off murmurs listening.

A partial explanation of the fact that from this time forth Wordsworth produced less and less poetry is that

he suffered much from failure of sight, due to inflamed eyelids. He was obliged almost entirely to give up reading, and spent his days in the open air. The ample grounds of Rydal Mount, with the high terrace walk that commands a view of Rydal Water and the steeps of Loughrigg, were his great delight.

In these years of declining courage and distrust of the present, Wordsworth turned to the finished world of antiquity for solace and employment. He had completed a translation of three books of the "Æneid" by February 5, 1819. Five years later he took this work in hand again, and sent the manuscript to Coleridge. The latter disapproved of the undertaking. Even if performed as successfully as possible, it would add nothing to Wordsworth's fame, but it was, he said, not well done. "Since Milton," he wrote, "I know of no poet with so many *felicities* and unforgettable lines and stanzas as you. And to read, therefore, page after page without a single *brilliant* note depresses me, and I grow peevish with you for having wasted your time on a work *so* much below you, that you cannot *stoop* and *take*. Finally, my conviction is that you undertake an *impossibility*, and that there is no medium between a prose version and one on the avowed principle of compensation in the widest sense. I confine myself to *Virgil*, when I say this."

The same impulse that caused Wordsworth to translate Virgil impelled him to write verses on "The Pillar of Trajan," though his immediate purpose was to show his son how easily an Oxford prize-poem might be composed on this subject. The last nine lines lift the spirit, with something of his old imaginative power:

> Where now the haughty Empire that was spread
> With such fond hope? her very speech is dead;
> Yet glorious Art the power of Time defies,
> And Trajan still, through various enterprise,
> Mounts, in this fine illusion, toward the skies:
> Still are we present with the Imperial Chief,
> Nor cease to gaze upon the bold Relief
> Till Rome, to silent marble unconfined,
> Becomes with all her years a vision of the Mind.

Only two other poems are ascribed to 1825, six to 1826, and about a score to 1827. Of all these only four are well known or much worth knowing: the lines "To a Skylark," beginning "Ethereal minstrel! Pilgrim of the Sky!" and three sonnets, "Scorn not the Sonnet, Critic, you have frowned," "There is a pleasure in poetic pains," and "If thou indeed derive thy light from Heaven," and even this last was probably written long before 1827. There are fine parts also in the poem "To May," "Though many suns have risen and set." The "Farewell Lines addressed to Charles and Mary Lamb on the occasion of their removing from London to the country" are, one may say without presumption, quite unworthy of their subject. The sonnet entitled "Retirement" is thoroughly immoral. No Epicurean poet of the Roman decadence could have taught a worse lesson.

Coleridge was the only friend left who had the courage to speak freely to Wordsworth by way of criticism. After a few attempts Lamb had given it up, and even the keen hints half hidden in sportive language no longer occurred in his letters. Robinson once ventured to ease his mind of a certain anxiety, but not directly to the poet. He expressed his misgivings to Dorothy, between whom and himself there had sprung up a delightful intimacy. No doubt he hoped she would in some discreet way communicate the matter to her brother. Writing about the classification of the poems in the projected complete edition of 1827—a subject on which a great deal of needless advice was being given, for Wordsworth did as he pleased in the end and arranged them according to a system which nobody understood but himself—Robinson took his courage in both hands, and said:

"It is a sort of moral and intellectual suicide in your brother not to have continued his admirable series of poems 'dedicated to liberty'—he might add 'and public virtue.' . . . I assure you it gives me real pain when I think that some future commentator may possibly hereafter write: 'This great poet survived to the fifth

decennary of the nineteenth century, but he appears to have died in the year 1814, as far as life consisted in an active sympathy with the temporary welfare of his fellow-creatures. He had written heroically and divinely against the tyranny of Napoleon, but was quite indifferent to all the successive tyrannies which disgraced the succeeding times.' "

This remarkable prophecy has been more than fulfilled. The date of Wordsworth's " death " has been fixed by some " commentators " as early as 1807. Others, less exacting, grant him six or seven years more. A few, mindful of the austere beauty of some of the later sonnets, and not insensible to the artistic finish of almost everything that proceeded from his pen, prefer to think that, like a graceful shoot growing from the mighty trunk of a pollarded elm, an excellent minor poet survived for very many years the *vates sacer*.

Robinson accepted a pressing invitation to visit the Lakes on his way home from a trip in Ireland and Scotland in the autumn of 1826, but, as Dora Wordsworth was at that time critically ill, he did not stay at Rydal Mount, and had only a few days of Wordsworth's company. They walked on Loughrigg Fell, and compared the beauty of the English and Scottish lakes with those of Killarney.

The delicate question on which Robinson had touched in his letter to Dorothy was probably not mentioned, though he had a great deal of honest bluntness with all his amiability and tact. He had said some very bold things to judges on the bench, but would scarcely have had the hardihood to rebuke Wordsworth on Loughrigg. A safer topic was the distribution of poems in the new edition, and perhaps Robinson reported Lamb's remark: " There is only one good order, and that is the order in which they were written—that is, a history of the poet's mind."

Robinson saw much of William Blake in the last three years of the latter's life, and always found that the mention of Wordsworth's name awoke in him the visionary faculty. We can see the inspired old man,

in his bare lodgings, shabbily dressed, relating to the shrewd lawyer his conversations with Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, and ranging in this august company the author of the " Intimations of Immortality."

Robinson wrote on February 10, 1825,

" He professes to be very hostile to Plato, and reproaches Wordsworth with being, not a Christian, but a Platonist. . . . He asked me whether Wordsworth believed in the Scriptures. On my replying in the affirmative, he said he had been much pained by reading the Introduction to The Excursion. It brought on a fit of illness. The passage was produced, and read:

> Jehovah—with his thunder and the choir
> Of shouting angels, and the empyreal thrones—
> I pass them unalarmed.

This '*pass them unalarmed*' greatly offended Blake Does Mr. Wordsworth think his mind can surpass Jehovah? I tried to explain this passage in a sense in harmony with Blake's own theories, but failed, and Wordsworth was finally set down as a Pagan; but still with high praise, as the greatest poet of the age."

Flaxman, that other mystical genius, had expressed to Robinson similar misgivings about the same passage. Blake had a short and ready way with men who turned aside from " God " to " Nature," the two opposite principles in the universe as he conceived of it. " Dante," he declared calmly, " was an Atheist—a mere politician, busied about this world, as Milton was, till in his old age he returned to God, whom he had had in his childhood." " I am to continue my visits," Robinson concluded, " and to read to him Wordsworth, of whom he seems to entertain a high idea." On December 27 Robinson wrote:

" I read to him Wordsworth's incomparable ode, which he heartily enjoyed. But he repeated, ' I fear Wordsworth loves nature, and nature is the work of the Devil. The Devil is in us as far as we are nature.' . . . The parts of Wordsworth's ode which Blake most enjoyed were the most obscure—at all events, those which I least like and comprehend."

CHAPTER XXV

THE SAGE OF RYDAL

The death of Sir George Beaumont, on February 7, 1827, made the first gap in the circle of friends who had accompanied Wordsworth through middle life. The loss was deeply felt. Sir George had about him a sweet dignity which caused men in his presence to speak and act as becomingly as they could.

He was a sincere and accomplished lover of the arts. His kindness and generosity to Wordsworth should never be forgotten. But wherever the latter deferred to his taste in matters of poetry, the result was unfortunate. To a desire to please Sir George we must attribute, in many of Wordsworth's poems, after 1807, a pietistic flavour, a shrinking conservatism, a return to a conventional style, and a general air of having been written by one who felt himself to be old. As a final proof of friendship, Sir George bequeathed to the poet an annuity of £100 " to defray the expenses of a yearly tour."* The form of the gift was well chosen, for Wordsworth had truly said that wandering was his passion. His library, for example, which was ill provided with works of modern fiction and poetry, was remarkably rich in books of travel, some of them ancient and rare.

The period of five years which followed the publication of " Ecclesiastical Sketches " ended in the issue of a collective edition of Wordsworth's poems, including " The Excursion," the preface to the second edition of " Lyrical Ballads," and the Essay Supplementary, in five handsome volumes. The dedication is to Sir George

* Mrs. Coleridge, in a letter to Poole, July, 1827 (original in the British Museum), says that Sir George left to her and Southey £100 apiece, and to Wordsworth £100 and an annuity of £100 for life.

Beaumont. Longman was the publisher, the date 1827, and the price forty-five shillings.

The periodical correcting of old poems for new editions gave work to the whole household. The state of Wordsworth's eyes preventing him from holding the pen, an immense deal of drudgery fell upon his wife, his sister, his daughter, and Sara Hutchinson. As far back as 1816, Charles Lamb had hinted that perhaps he leaned too heavily upon his loving helpers: "Your manual graphy is terrible, dark as Lycophron. . . . I should not wonder if the constant making out of such Paragraphs is the cause of that weakness in Mrs. W.'s Eyes, as she is tenderly pleased to express it. Dorothy, I hear, has mounted spectacles; so you have deoculated two of your dearest relations in life." The labour of preparing the edition of 1827 was enormous, when added to the nervous strain of ministering to the mental and moral needs of a man suffering from depression of spirits. Among several suitors for Dora's hand, the one favoured by her was Edward Quillinan, a retired army officer of Irish descent and a Catholic, son-in-law of Sir Egerton Brydges. He had been settled since 1822 at Rydal, where his wife died within a year, leaving two young daughters. For many years Wordsworth refused his consent to Dora's marriage, or gave it with such painful reluctance that it did not take place till 1841.

It is most pleasant, and surprising, to learn that in June and July, 1828, Wordsworth and Coleridge were once more fellow-travellers. The arrival of a letter from S. T. C. had become a rare event at Rydal Mount. His name seldom occurs in the Wordsworth correspondence during the twenties. Yet now the two poets, with Dora Wordsworth, spent about six weeks together in Flanders, the Rhine Valley, and Holland.

An Irish traveller, Thomas Colley Grattan, has set down with great fulness, in a curious and rare book, his memories of three days, beginning June 25, 1828, spent with the two poets in the neighbourhood of Brussels and Namur. He was introduced to them at Brussels. He says of Coleridge:

"He was about five feet five inches in height, of a full and lazy appearance, but not actually stout. He was dressed in black, and wore short breeches, buttoned and tied at the knees, and black silk stockings. And in this costume (the same that he describes himself to have worn in his earliest voyages and travels in the year 1798) he worked along, in public coaches or barges, giving the idea of his original profession, an itinerant preacher. His face was extremely handsome, its expression placid and benevolent. His mouth was particularly pleasing, and his grey eyes, neither large nor prominent, were full of intelligent softness. His hair, of which he had plenty, was entirely white. His forehead and cheeks were unfurrowed, and the latter showed a healthy bloom. . . . Wordsworth was a perfect antithesis to Coleridge—tall, wiry, harsh in features, coarse in figure, inelegant in looks. He was roughly dressed in a long brown *surtout*, striped duck trousers, fustian gaiters, and thick shoes. He more resembled a mountain farmer than a 'Lake poet.' His whole air was unrefined and unprepossessing. . . . There was a total absence of affectation or egotism; not the least effort at display, or assumption of superiority over any of those who were quite prepared to concede it to him. He seemed satisfied to let his friend and fellow-traveller take the lead, with a want of pretension rarely found in men of literary reputation far inferior to his; while there was something unobtrusively amiable in his bearing towards his daughter."

Grattan was carried off his feet by the flow of Coleridge's enthusiastic talk. Wordsworth's remarks, by contrast, appeared at first commonplace; but their truth and good sense gradually became apparent. At Waterloo and Quatre Bras, "Wordsworth keenly inspected the field of battle, insatiably curious." At Namur, Coleridge was content to enjoy the general impression; Wordsworth counted the arches of the bridge "with the accuracy and hardness of a stone-cutter." Wordsworth took the lead in practical matters, making inquiries and keeping in the van. On Grattan's noting his imperfect use of French, Wordsworth told him that "five-and-twenty years previously he understood and spoke it well, but that his abhorrence of the Revolutionary excesses made him resolve if possible to forget the language altogether,

and that for a long time he had not read nor spoken a word of it." Near Dinant the Irish author took a long stroll with Wordsworth, and naturally, since he had previously regarded him as a poet full of "vapoury abstractions," was surprised to find him quite level-headed. "There was," he says, "an inflexible, matter-of-fact manner and spirit in all he said, which came out in a rather hoarse and harsh *burr* that made it disagreeable as well as unimpressive." They talked about Byron, whom Wordsworth declared to have been greatly overrated. He doubted whether Byron had been a man of much originality of mind.

John Wordsworth, having taken orders, was in 1828 curate of a parish at Whitwick, near Coleorton Hall. His aunt Dorothy spent a large part of this year and the next with him. In 1829 he received from Lord Lonsdale the living of Moresby, near Whitehaven. Young William was not so easily settled, having an inability to learn mathematics, and after trying several schools was sent to live in a German home at Hamburg.

The last of Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals begins June 26, 1828, and contains notes made during a visit to the Isle of Man where she was the guest of Mrs. Wordsworth's brother, Henry Hutchinson. In reading it we are struck once more with the directness of her way of seeing things. In looking about a market-place, a harbour, a hillside, or a village street, her quick eye caught the striking features of the scene. No moody temper, no preoccupation, stood between her and what she saw. If reflections rose in her mind, they were the result, not the cause, of her impressions. The same happy heart was in her as of old, and the same enjoyment of life's never-ending spectacle. There is a little more independence of judgment than the earlier Journals show, and her power to seize the essentials is better trained; but otherwise no change is perceptible, and the reader feels that she was as well fitted as ever to walk beside a musing master of words and show him what to describe.

If ever a family had reason to be happy, it was the

household at Rydal Mount. One cannot feel quite patient with its head, who lived in gloomy apprehension that his own death was near, and that his country was doomed to some awful fate. But when, early in 1829, the first stroke of a real calamity fell, it descended not on him, but on the most lively, cheerful, and courageous member of the family, on one, as sensitive as himself, who had resisted more bravely, but, as the event showed, less successfully, the encroachments of age. A mysterious ailment befell Dorothy Wordsworth. It is sometimes referred to as an inflammation. It has often been charged to overexertion in those long walks, which had been her delight.* The trouble was really of a nervous character. She recovered from the first attack, though her life was in danger. "What a shock that was to our poor hearts!" wrote Wordsworth to Crabb Robinson, April 6, 1829. "Were she to depart, the phase of my moon would be robbed of light to a degree that I have not courage to think of. During her illness we often thought of your high esteem for her goodness, and of your kindness towards her upon all occasions." Up to this time she had never been seriously ill in her life, and for three years longer she enjoyed fairly good bodily health, with serenity of mind. Then the blow fell again, and after 1832 she remained an invalid. Even when a measure of physical strength returned, she suffered from a belief that she could not walk; and though the clouded mind shone forth at intervals, it was never free. She was still happy and thoughtful of others, but her reason was no longer in continuous command. I have seen letters from her, after her second illness, to members of the Marshall family, which, though fragmentary and evidently written in spite of great weakness, are full of her old kind love. She lived at Rydal Mount till her death in 1855. Her brother's interests were ever her own, and so late as January 9, 1830, she wrote as follows, in a long letter to Charles and Mary Lamb:

"His muscular powers are in no degree diminished. Indeed, I think he walks regularly more than ever,

* Even in 1828 she planned to climb Helvellyn once more.

finding fresh air the best bracing to his weak eyes. He is still the crack skater on Rydal Lake, and as to climbing of mountains, the hardiest and the youngest are yet hardly a match for him. In composition I can perceive no failure, and his imagination seems as vigorous as in youth; yet he shrinks from his great work, and both during the last and present winter has been employed in writing small poems. . . . My sister and I take every opportunity of pressing upon him the necessity of applying to his great work, and this he feels, resolves to do it, and again resolution fails. And now I almost fear habitually that it will be ever so."

There was occurring at this time, 1828, a spiritual event which would have given Wordsworth great encouragement had he known of it. The story is related, with singular straightforwardness, in John Stuart Mill's "Autobiography." At the age of twenty-two Mill had learned more of book-knowledge than perhaps any other youth of his age ever had done. He desired to be a reformer of the world. It seemed to him quite possible that the world might be reformed. Progress was his religion. But when he was in a state of depression from overwork, the fantastic thought forced itself upon him, that even when the world was thoroughly reformed, men might not be happy; it might even be that "the pleasures of life, being no longer kept up by struggle and depression, would cease to be pleasures." I fancy that this was an inadequate expression of a wider sense of want; that his soul, wearied with the continual exercise of analysis, craved some of that synthetic or expansive exercise which is the common and easy movement of poetic and mystical natures, or, to use the word in a narrow sense, of "religious" natures.

"This state of my thoughts and feelings," he says, "made the fact of my reading Wordsworth for the first time (in the Autumn of 1828) an important event in my life. I took up the collection of his poems from curiosity, with no expectation of mental relief from it, though I had before resorted to poetry with that hope. In the worst period of my depression, I had read through the whole of Byron (then new to me), to try whether

a poet, whose peculiar department was supposed to be that of the intenser feelings, could rouse any feeling in me. As might be expected, I got no good from this reading, but the reverse. . . . But while Byron was exactly what did not suit my condition, Wordsworth was exactly what did."

"What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings, which had no connection with struggle or imperfection, but would be made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence. . . . The delight which these poems gave me proved that with culture of this sort there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis."

Three years later, in 1831, Mill saw something of Wordsworth, and it is gratifying to note that his opinion of the man in no wise fell behind his estimate of the poetry. Indeed, of judgments passed upon Wordsworth by persons who knew him only in the second half of his life, Mill's is by far the most important, and, considering who made it, the most favourable. It is set down at length in a letter to John Sterling, October 20 to 22, 1831.

"He talks on no subject more instructively than on states of society and forms of government. Those who best know him seem to be most impressed with the catholic character of his ability. I have been told that Lockhart has said of him that he would have been an admirable country attorney. Now a man who could have been either Wordsworth or a country attorney could certainly have been anything else which circumstances had led him to desire to be. The next thing that struck me was the extreme compre-

hensiveness and philosophic spirit which is in him. By these expressions I mean the direct antithesis of what the Germans most expressively call one-sidedness. Wordsworth seems always to know the pros and cons of every question; and when you think he strikes the balance wrong it is only because you think he estimates erroneously some matter of fact. . . . Then when you get Wordsworth on the subjects which are peculiarly his, such as the theory of his own art (that is, if art is to be defined as the expression or embodying in words or forms of the highest and most refined parts of nature), no one can converse with him without feeling that he has advanced that great subject beyond any other man, being probably the first person who ever combined, with such eminent success in the practice of the art, such high powers of generalization and habits of meditation on its principles. Besides all this, he seems to me the best talker I ever heard (and I have heard several first-rate ones); and there is a benignity and kindliness about his whole demeanour which confirms what his poetry would lead one to expect, along with a perfect simplicity of character which is delightful in anyone, but most of all in a person of first-rate intellect. You see I am somewhat enthusiastic on the subject of Wordsworth, having found him still more admirable and delightful a person on a nearer view than I had figured to myself from his writings. . . ."

Their dear friend Hartley Coleridge gave the Wordsworths much anxiety about this time. He was a simple, humble, kindly soul, a man of genius and full of strange lore, but eccentric and intemperate. They had provided lodgings for him in their neighbourhood. Everybody liked him, and he seemed to be comfortably settled. But having made a little money by his writings, he disappeared. Dorothy wrote sadly to Crabb Robinson that they heard of him as a vagrant, tramping the roads and sleeping in barns. It was her sad duty to report his doings to his mother.

In September, 1831, occurred the last meeting with Scott. In a note to Sir Walter, dated the 16th, Wordsworth describes the manner of his journey north: "'There's a man wi' a veil, and a lass drivin',' exclaimed a little urchin, as we entered merry Carlisle a

couple of hours ago, on our way to Abbotsford." The lass was his daughter Dora; the veil was a screen for his eyes; the horse and cart were predestined to trouble. His nephew Charles, afterwards Bishop of St. Andrews, was going ahead to meet Scott, and this was the beginning of a letter introducing him to that great man. Three days later (Lockhart says the 21st) began that last reunion, in which the feeling of hospitality roused Scott to shake off the fatal lethargy that was stealing over his outwearied mind and frame, and a sense of fellowship restored to Wordsworth the full possession of his poetic powers. The scene has been affectingly described by Lockhart, Sir Walter's son-in-law. It is, in some ways, the culminating passage of his great work. Wordsworth's own account, in the Fenwick note to "Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems," sets it very vividly before us:

"How sadly changed did I find him from the man I had seen so healthy, gay, and hopeful, a few years before, when he said at the inn at Paterdale, in my presence, his daughter Anne also being there, with Mr. Lockhart, my own wife and daughter, and Mr. Quillinan, 'I mean to live till I am *eighty*, and I shall write as long as I live.' But to return to Abbotsford; the inmates and guests we found there were Sir Walter, Major Scott (his son), Anne Scott (his daughter), and Mr. and Mrs. Lockhart, Mr. Liddell, his Lady and Brother, and Mr. Allan the painter, and Mr. Laidlaw, a very old friend of Sir Walter's. One of Burns's sons, an officer in the Indian service, had left the house a day or two before, and had kindly expressed his regret that he could not wait my arrival, a regret that I may truly say was mutual. In the evening Mr. and Mrs. Liddell sang, and Mrs. Lockhart chanted old ballads to her harp; and Mr. Allan, hanging over the back of a chair, told and acted old stories in a humorous way. With this exhibition and his daughter's singing, Sir Walter was much amused, as indeed were we all as far as circumstances would allow. . . . On Tuesday morning Sir Walter Scott accompanied us, and most of the party to Newark Castle on the Yarrow. When we alighted from the carriages he walked pretty stoutly, and had great pleasure in revisiting those his favourite haunts. Of

that excursion the verses *Yarrow Revisited* are a memorial. . . . On our return in the afternoon we had to cross the Tweed directly opposite Abbotsford. The wheel of our carriage grated upon the pebbles in the bed of the stream that there flows somewhat rapidly; a rich but sad light of rather a purple than a golden hue was spread over the Eildon Hills at that moment, and thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream, I was not a little moved, and expressed some of my feelings in the Sonnet beginning—'A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain.' At noon on Thursday we left Abbotsford, and in the morning of that day Sir Walter and I had a serious conversation *tête-à-tête*, when he spoke with gratitude of the happy life which upon the whole he had led. He had written in my daughter's Album, before he came into the breakfast-room that morning, a few stanzas addressed to her, and while putting the book into her hand, in his own study, standing by his desk, he said to her in my presence—'I should not have done anything of this kind but for your father's sake: they are probably the last verses I shall ever write.' They show how much his mind was impaired, not by the strain of thought but by the execution, some of the lines being imperfect, and one stanza wanting corresponding rhymes: one letter, the initial S, had been omitted in the spelling of his own name. . . . Both the *Yarrow Revisited* and the 'Sonnet' were sent him before his departure from England."

Considering the author, the subject, the occasion, and the extraordinarily high quality of these farewell lines, it is no wonder they are considered by many readers to be the most interesting sonnet in our language. Well known, too, is Wordsworth's fine tribute to Scott as "the man who has during the last six-and-twenty years diffused more innocent pleasure than ever fell to the lot of any human being to do in his own lifetime." Henry Taylor, the author of "Philip van Artevelde," visited both Scott and Wordsworth in that autumn of 1831, and gives in his "Autobiography" a graphic description of them both:

"Wordsworth and Scott dwelt in regions as far apart as it was possible for men to occupy who each covered so large a space. Neither, I should think, could appre-

ciate the other in full measure; but Scott would perhaps go nearer to a full appreciation of Wordsworth than Wordsworth of Scott. . . . They were as little alike in their aspect as in their genius. The only thing common to both countenances was that neither expressed a limitation. . . . Scott's had a character of rusticity, Wordsworth's was a face which did not assign itself to any class. It was a hardy, weather-beaten old face, which might have belonged to a nobleman, a yeoman, a mariner, or a philosopher; for there was so much of the man that you lost sight of superadded distinctions. For my own part I should not, judging by his face, have guessed him to be a poet. To my eyes there was more of strength than refinement in the face. But I think he took a different view of it himself. Whatever view he took, if occasion arose, he would be sure to disclose it; for his thoughts went naked. . . . Perhaps what was wanting was only *physical* refinement. It was a rough grey face, full of rifts and clefts and fissures, and of which, someone said, you might expect lichens to grow."

Before the end of October there came a welcome visitor to Rydal Mount in the person of the Rev. Robert Jones. Dorothy had described him in advance to Mrs. Clarkson as follows:

" In October we expect Mr. Jones, the companion of my brother forty years ago over the Alps. He looks back to that journey as the golden and sunny spot in his life. It would delight you to hear the pair talk of their adventures. My brother, active, lively, and almost as strong as ever on a mountain top; Jones, fat and roundabout and rosy, and puffing and panting while he climbs the little hill from the road to our house. Never was there a more remarkable contrast; yet time seems to have strengthened the attachment of the native of Cambrian mountains to his Cumbrian friend."

Of personal and domestic matters in 1832 there is little to record. On June 25 Wordsworth wrote from Moresby to Professor Hamilton:

" My dear sister has been languishing more than seven months in a sick-room, nor dare I or any of her friends entertain a hope that her strength will ever be restored." In the same letter he says of Coleridge: " He and my

beloved sister are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted, and they are now proceeding, as it were *pari passu*, along the path of sickness—I will not say towards the grave, but I trust towards a blessed immortality. It was not my intention to write so seriously; my heart is full, and you must excuse it. . . . A fortnight ago I came hither to my son and daughter, who are living a gentle, happy, quiet, and useful life together. My daughter Dora is also with us. . . . A week ago Mr. W. S. Landor, the poet and author of 'Imaginary Conversations' (which probably have fallen in your way) appeared here. We had never met before, though several letters had passed between us, and as I had not heard that he was in England, my gratification in seeing him was heightened by surprise. We passed a day together at the house of my friend Mr. Rawson, on the banks of Wast-Water. His conversation is lively and original, his learning great, though he will not allow it, and his laugh the heartiest I have heard for a long time."

To Crabb Robinson he wrote on July 21, from Rydal Mount:

"You will grieve to hear that your invalid friend, my dear sister, never quits her room but for a few minutes, and we think is always weakened by the exertion. She is, however, God be praised, in a contented and happy state of mind. . . . Yesterday I was on the top of Helvellyn with my friend Mr. Julius Hare of Trinity College, Dr. Arnold, Master of Rugby—as keen a reformer as yourself, or any other dissenting Tory. . . . Once I was upon this summit with Sir Humphry Davy and Sir Walter Scott; and many times have I trod it with my nearest and dearest relations and friends, several of whom are gone—and others going—to their last abode. But I have touched upon too melancholy a string. Life is at best but a dream, and in times of political commotion it is too often crowded with ghostly images. God preserve us all!"

The death of Scott, on September 21, deepened, and in part justified, if anything could justify, this gloom. Some compensation for the loss of old friends came with the settlement of Dr. Thomas Arnold and his family at Fox How, less than a mile from Rydal Mount.

With them was established a close intimacy, destined to last until the close of Wordsworth's life.

The prospect of living near the Wordsworths was one of the chief inducements that led to the purchase of Fox How, as may be seen from the following letter from Dr. Arnold to J. T. Coleridge from Rugby, April 5, 1832:

"Our intercourse with the Wordsworths was one of the brightest spots of all; nothing could exceed their friendliness, and my almost daily walks with him were things not to be forgotten. Once, and once only, we had a good fight about the Reform Bill, during a walk up Greenhead Ghyll to see 'the unfinished Sheepfold' recorded in 'Michael.' But I am sure that our political disagreement did not at all interfere with our enjoyment of each other's society; for I think that in the great principles of things we agreed very entirely, and only differed as to the *τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα*. We are thinking of buying or renting a place at Grasmere or Rydal, to spend our holidays at constantly, for not only are the Wordsworths and the scenery a very great attraction, but, etc., etc."

H. W. Pickersgill, the artist, stayed ten days at Rydal Mount this summer, and painted a portrait of Wordsworth for St. John's College, Cambridge. Dora wrote on September 27:

"Ten more pleasant days were never passed. The garret was our studio, our lowly cottage not affording a light sufficiently high for a painter in any other corner. And here we received all our company, whomsoever they might be, Mr. Pickersgill not caring how full the room was. He, too, when you know him, is a most interesting person, so completely wrapped up in his pictures. And you may well imagine how grateful we feel to him for giving us such a picture of such a father. But enough; I am forgetting that everyone cannot care about this said poet quite as much as his daughter does."

On May 30, 1833, Crabb Robinson wrote in his Diary:

"I went with Mrs. Aders to Pickersgill's, to see his portrait of Wordsworth. It is in every respect a fine picture, except that the artist has made the disease in Wordsworth's eyes too apparent. The picture wants an oculist."

Crabb Robinson, within whose range Carlyle and John Stuart Mill had now come, makes relatively few references to Wordsworth in 1831 and 1832. On March 24 of the latter year he wrote:

"Yesterday I had a melancholy letter from Wordsworth. He gives a sad account of his sister, and talks of leaving the country on account of the impending ruin to be apprehended from the Reform Bill!"

A close study of the Pickersgill portrait will show that Wordsworth was already an aged man. Visitors have described his healthy appearance as of one who lived in the open air, his brown skin with its ruddy glow; but his hair was thin and grey, his temples were hollow, his cheeks deeply furrowed, his chin sunken, and the light withdrawn to the depths of his eyes. Resignation rested like a sunset glow upon his face, from which almost every sign of outward-looking and aggressive courage had departed. After a life of little more than sixty years, wholesomely spent, a life successful in one of the highest and most esteemed forms of human endeavour, a life rich in domestic joys and public recognition, a life, moreover, not weakened by a single illness, this is indeed surprising. He himself attributed his rapid and premature decline to anxiety about the fate of his country. In a sense this was its cause. But the reason his anxious cares wore him down, when other men with views no less gloomy than his kept young and vigorous, lay in the passionate intensity of his nature. Upon whatever object his heart was set, this for the time engaged all his devotion, all his thought, all his strength. His entire life as a poet had been divided between two fields—nature and political speculation. The imaginative quality requisite for the fullest poetical enjoyment of nature and for the communication of this joy to others, seldom outlasts the age of forty. Speculative power, on the other hand, often increases with age for many years beyond that point. In Wordsworth's case the speculative instinct was strong; his love of country and humanity was deep. Half of his

intellectual life was devoted to politics, and as time passed it became his absorbing interest. But he had chosen a side on which there was little to inspire generous emotions and bold thoughts.

Out of the innumerable expressions of panic which might be taken from his letters between 1827 and 1832, I shall choose only a few. He imagined that the Roman Catholics, if they obtained political equality, would attempt to overthrow the Church of England and subject the State to Rome. He dreaded any enlargement of the franchise, because he foresaw that it would lead to universal suffrage, in which he discerned only evil. The thought of frequent parliaments afflicted him. The "something German" in his character, which Crabb Robinson perceived, showed itself in his habit of ordering his political judgments by very distant ends and ideals, ascertained through mere speculation. There was something French in this, too, and, let us admit, something human. But it is a habit full of danger; short-sighted practical methods are often the wisest. Not only was he drawn to these fond visions of an England ruled for ever by a benevolent aristocracy, but he was impelled by a dismal fear. "I resided," he wrote to Lord Lonsdale, "fifteen months in France, during the heat of the Revolution, and have some personal experience of the course which these movements must take, if not fearlessly resisted, before the transfer of legislative power takes place." The fear of what might happen to the Church and to the prosperity of the wealthy classes if the people gained knowledge afflicted him, and he declared that "Mechanics' Institutes make discontented spirits and insubordinate and presumptuous workmen." He opposed free and compulsory elementary education.

He was ill prepared for the wave of revolution which swept over Europe in 1830. Owing to the weakness of his eyes, he had been reading very little ("I have not opened a book for nine weeks," he wrote to Crabb Robinson about this time), and, his opinions being fixed, it was useless for anyone to present fresh facts to him

or argue with him. France he regarded as a country without religion. He deplored her equalitarian tendencies, and denounced her laws of inheritance, which have tended to a general diffusion of wealth instead of allowing it to be concentrated in the hands of a few. He was haunted with visions of what might befall England should the Reform Bill pass. A glimpse of his condition is given in a letter from his daughter, dated October 26, 1831:

"All are well, father, mother, and aunts, the first-mentioned still prophesying ruin and destruction to this hitherto flourishing spot of earth. The evil which he foresees from this dreadful Reform Bill quite weighs his spirit down."

We catch another glimpse in Dorothy's letter to Crabb Robinson dated December 1, 1831:

"If it were not for the newspapers, we should know nothing of the turbulence of our great towns and cities. Yet my poor brother is often heart-sick and almost desponding. . . . If it were not for public affairs his spirits would be as cheerful as ever."

To the Rev. J. K. Miller, a vicar in Nottinghamshire, he wrote on December 17, 1831, that his spirits were sinking under a weight of apprehension, and expressed the very comfortable opinion that piety should dispose "men who are anxious for social improvement to wait patiently for God's good time."

To Henry Taylor he wrote:

"The predominance given in Parliament to the dissenting interest, and to towns which have grown up recently, without a possibility of their being trained in habits of attachment either to the Constitution in Church and State, or what remained of the feudal frame of society in this country, will inevitably bring on a political and social revolution. What may be suffered by the existing generation no man can foresee, but the loss of liberty for a time will be the inevitable consequence. Despotism will be established, and the whole battle will have to be fought over by subsequent generations."

Amid all these whispers of panic he occasionally utters a more dignified sentiment, such as: "Means, in the concerns of this life, are infinitely more important than ends, which are to be valued mainly according to the qualities and virtues requisite for their attainment;" and again: "It has ever been the habit of my mind to trust that expediency will come out of fidelity to principles, rather than to seek my principles of action in calculations of expediency.'

Emerson visited Wordsworth August 28, 1833, and found him "a plain, elderly, white-haired man, not prepossessing, who laid down the law on the subject of America, of which he knew little, and talked instead of listening. Lucretius he esteems a far higher poet than Virgil, not in his system, which is nothing, but in his power of illustration." He said he thought Carlyle sometimes insane, and he abused Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister." "He had never gone farther than the first part; so disgusted was he that he threw the book across the room." He recited some of his poems. "This recitation was so unlooked for and surprising—he, the old Wordsworth, standing apart and reciting to me in a garden-walk, like a schoolboy declaiming—that I at first was near to laugh; but recollecting myself, that I had come thus far to see a poet, and he was chanting poems to me, I saw that he was right and I was wrong, and gladly gave myself up to hear." Wordsworth surprised Emerson "by the hard limits of his thought." "To judge from a single conversation, he made the impression of a narrow and very English mind." And the visitor, whose natural penetration served him, in this case, instead of knowledge of facts, and served him well, remarks: "It is not very rare to find persons, loving sympathy and ease, who expiate their departure from the common, in one direction, by their conformity in every other."

To another American visitor, the Rev. Orville Dewey, Wordsworth remarked that "although he was known to the world only as a poet, he had given twelve hours'

thought to the condition and prospects of society for one to poetry."

In the period of five years 1833-1837, Wordsworth suffered many personal losses, which he endured far more bravely than he had borne the mere thought of revolution. The death of Scott, in 1832, was followed, on July 25, 1834, by that of Coleridge. Little as the friends had seen of one another for the last twenty years, their spiritual union was of such a nature that only death could dissolve it. Wordsworth, as he wrote to Coleridge's son-in-law, dared not yield to the solemn thoughts and remembrances that pressed upon him. Charles Lamb died December 27 in the same year, and Sara Hutchinson June 25, 1835. Both were links with the glorious time of hope and freedom. Both were intimately associated with the memory of Coleridge. To Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth was indebted for faithful service as an amanuensis. She appears to have had a happy and romantic disposition. The sonnet which he dedicated to her memory gives no idea of her usefulness. It is doubtful whether he ever truly appreciated Lamb's humour or relished his honest criticism. Lamb began by speaking his mind to Wordsworth; then, seeing that this would not do, he assumed a serious and deferential tone, partly through genuine respect, but partly to avoid giving offence. It was suggested that Wordsworth should write his epitaph; but many strenuous attempts to achieve the necessary brevity and comprehensiveness failing, the lines were allowed to accumulate until there was produced the elegy "Written after the Death of Charles Lamb." In this are mentioned Lamb's drudgery as a clerk, his hard-earned independence, his love of the city, his charity, and his devotion to his sister, but one does not find here the Muses' joyous son or the learned scholar. One is glad that Wordsworth recognized the urgency of the occasion, but he failed to rise to its height. His personal feelings about Coleridge he resolutely kept hidden in his heart.

These were fatal years—Scott, Lamb, Sara Hutchin-

son, Coleridge, dead, and Dorothy Wordsworth reduced to childishness! Wordsworth between sixty and sixty-five suddenly became a lonely figure. His old friends James Losh and Fleming died in 1834, and were followed by genial Robert Jones, Felicia Hemans, and the Ettrick Shepherd, in 1835. In a little poem, composed that year, he commemorates Hogg, Scott, Coleridge, Lamb, Crabbe, and Mrs. Hemans, in lines of very variable quality, six of them and the best being dedicated to Coleridge.

Dorothy's distressing condition lay heavily upon him. At the best she was able to sit or be wheeled in the garden or take short drives, and for many weeks together she was confined to her chamber and even to her bed. At times she was painfully agitated and again had long intervals of quiet, in which she derived comfort from her flowers and the beautiful view from her window. A robin delighted her with its company, and used to perch and sing on a picture-nail in her room. Her memory was good, and she could recite many of her brother's short pieces and passages from other poets. But her sensibilities, even on the days when she felt strongest, were so delicate that the smell of flowers made her weep aloud like a child, and the sight of the shady lawn caused her to laugh with excitement. "In tenderness of heart," wrote her brother, "I do not honestly believe she was ever exceeded by any of God's creatures. Her loving-kindness has no bounds. God bless her for ever and ever."

In 1835, Wordsworth published a volume entitled "Yarrow Revisted, and Other Poems." It contained, besides many miscellaneous pieces, the "Poems composed during a Tour in Scotland, and on the English Border, in the Autumn of 1831," "Evening Voluntaries," and "Sonnets composed or suggested during a tour in Scotland in the Summer of 1833." It was published by Longman and dedicated to Samuel Rogers. Appended to the volume was a long Postscript in prose, in which the author discussed the Poor Laws, the condition of workmen in factories, and the question of

Church disestablishment, all from the conservative point of view.

The fifth collective edition of his poems began to appear in 1836, two volumes coming out that year and the remaining four in 1837. He and his household were engaged for eight months in the close work of testing new readings and correcting proof-sheets. From March 19 to August 7, 1837, he and Crabb Robinson, accompanied by Edward Moxen, the young publisher, travelled in France, Italy, Austria, and Germany. When Robinson got among Germans, with whom he liked to talk in their own language, he spent his evenings at cafés, leaving the poet to mope by himself. As Wordsworth could neither read by candle-light nor enjoy the conversation of strangers and throw himself into the life of foreign cities, it was with some relief, though none the less with gratitude to his kind and bustling companion, that he reached England on August 7. During the trip he frequently lamented that it had come too late in his life to be an effective stimulus to composition.

After a fortnight or so in London the poet went to Brinsop Court for September. Before going home he also spent a few days with Rogers at Broadstairs, and with Dr. William Howley, the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Addington Park. With the latter he took some long walks, in which they discussed the dangers which threatened the Established Church.

Robinson had spent the Christmas season at Rydal in 1835, having rooms in a cottage at the foot of the hill, beside the highroad, where he breakfasted, supped, and spent his mornings with books and his Diary. At one o'clock he dined with the Wordsworths, remaining at the Mount the rest of the afternoon or walking with members of the family. Dorothy Wordsworth greatly enjoyed his society and his letters. With Dora he had a make-believe quarrel, which went on merrily for years. Mrs. Wordsworth was grateful to him because his buoyant spirits cheered her husband. It must indeed have been salutary to the stiff conservative poet to have

with him a man who combined radical views in politics and religion with a happy disposition, strong common sense, a legal attitude, and deep religious interest. Accordingly, since Robinson, on his part, felt honoured by association with one whom, next to Goethe, he revered most of all the great men he had known, a winter visit to Rydal Mount became a regular feature of his calendar. The Arnolds had come to their new house, Fox How, in 1834, and added a delightful vigour and stir to life in the neighbourhood. Dr. Arnold's theological views were not so acceptable to Wordsworth as to his guest, but his genial, wholesome manner proved irresistible, and a lasting intimacy sprang up between the two families.

As might have been expected, the successes of Liberalism did not weaken Wordsworth's political zeal or change his opinions. His forebodings were as dismal as ever. There are probably few men living now who would seriously dispute J. R. Green's statement that "no Ministry has ever wrought greater or more beneficial changes than the Whig Ministry under Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne during its ten years of rule from 1831 to 1841;" yet Wordsworth, even though no catastrophe had yet followed the passage of the Reform Bill, could write thus in November, 1833, to Robinson:

"My opinion is that the people are bent upon the destruction of their ancient Institutions; and that nothing since, I will not say the passing, but since the broaching of the Reform Bill could or can prevent it. I would bend my endeavours to strengthen to the utmost the rational portion of the Tory party, but from no other hope than this, that the march towards destruction may be less rapid by their interposing something of a check; and the destruction of the monarchy thereby attended with less injury to social order. They are more blind than bats or moles, who cannot see that it is a change or rather an overthrow of social order, as dependent upon the present distribution of property, which is the object of the Radicals."

After a little more in this vein, Mrs. Wordsworth, who held the pen, interjected: "And I, M. W., will not write

another word on this subject!" He opposed, tooth and nail, the admission of dissenters to Cambridge University. The only reform he countenanced, except the abolition of slavery in the British colonies, was the movement in favour of international copyright. For this he really toiled, writing or dictating as many as forty letters in two or three days, in support of Serjeant Talfourd's bill. He also interested himself in efforts to build a church at Cockermouth, his native town.

He is said to have talked with much eloquence on the principles of poetry. Few written expressions on this subject have, however, come down to us from the years we are now considering. He insists, in his letters, that poetry is more of an *Art* than the world is disposed to admit, pointing out how scrupulous Milton, for example, was in his workmanship. He several times expresses regret at having written his own critical Prefaces and Supplementary Essay, and blames himself for complying with Coleridge's wishes in this particular. Being a man *integer vitæ* at every period of his life, he was honest in this, for the three things, democratic views of society, universalism in critical theory, and simplicity in poetical composition, belonged together. Having given up the first, he was bound to give up the others. With reactionary politics, he had returned to a more restricted view of the scope, purpose, and method of poetry, and in practice conformed to his theory.

In the period of five years from 1833 to 1837, Wordsworth's powers of composition were exerted fitfully. The mind of a great thinker and the hand of a cunning artist were still his. What had changed was the impulse and the method. Nothing shows more plainly than this change that personality is determined less by the degree of a man's intelligence than by the nature of his desires. Wordsworth's mind by this time, and thenceforth, was fixed upon two supreme objects—one earthly, the other heavenly. The former object was the maintenance substantially *in statu quo* of the English Church

and State. The other was life after death, in union with Christ. These two desires were the mainspring of every fresh welling up of poetry within him, and every deepening of old currents, throughout the last twenty years of his life. We may have felt impatient with him for too soon resigning himself to the idea that he was old. Had he been able to foresee that he should live to be an octogenarian, perhaps his middle years would have been full of hope and joy. At last he was really an old man, in fact as well as in feeling, and it must be admitted that he bore his years with dignity, and used to splendid advantage the great powers which were still his. But when it is said of Wordsworth that he was thus or thus, or believed in this or that, it is always necessary to ask, Which Wordsworth—he of the sunny slope, or he of the shadow?

His poetical method, his tone, his style, changed as completely as his personality. "A Wren's Nest," 1833, for example, would scarcely suggest that it was by the author of "The Sparrow's Nest," 1801.

There is much profit and delight to be had in reading these poems of Wordsworth's genuine old age. They contain no single word which is not the result of studious care. In many cases the workmanship is extremely fine and close. Occasionally, when the subject warms him, he throws back upon it a mild radiance like the tempered light of a wintry sun. With manifest sincerity he finds a way of expressing in season and out of season his rather narrow and colourless piety. At all costs he will do this; it is now a main purpose of his life. We can only wish the religion of his old age had been more generous and comprehensive, more like that of his youth. A fine example of his later manner is the grave and pensive poem, beginning, "The sun is couched, the sea-fowl gone to rest."

His tour with his son John and Henry Crabb Robinson, in the Isle of Man and in Scotland, in the autumn of 1833, took him out of himself to some extent, and encouraged him to direct his thoughts upon external nature. But the time has passed when he could submit

unreservedly to her influence. He must now use her as an object of meditation, or as a servant of abstract thought. He stands detached from her, no longer ranging freely with her, hand in hand. She is alienated, even suspect. His heart is fixed upon another country and other loves. It is very sad and discouraging to see a great poet turning away as if in reprobation from a pure love that never played him false. Of the forty-eight pieces composed or suggested during the tour, one, the sonnet " In Sight of the Town of Cockermouth," is deservedly very famous, and somewhat reconciles us to the ever-recurrent topic of the grave. In the " Stanzas suggested in a Steam-boat off Saint Bees' Heads, on the Coast of Cumberland," and the sonnets " In the Channel, between the Coast of Cumberland and the Isle of Man," and " At Sea off the Isle of Man," he utters a futile and melancholy protest against progress, reason, and science, on the assumption that these forces are at enmity with imagination's finer ministry. This becomes a persistent note in his poetry. On lips less restrained than his it rose to an unmeaning shriek. Wordsworth's notion of the simple and the meek,

> Blest in their pious ignorance, though weak
> To cope with Sages undevoutly free,

shows that he had fallen into a new kind of panic. Moreover, when he repeatedly exalts mediæval Christianity and refers to the Reformation with a slight shudder, and when he even apologizes for the " bold credulities " of the past, we realize that the same repulsion which produced the Oxford Movement was at work in him. The earlier note, of political Toryism, corresponding to this new note of religious reaction, is struck more violently than ever in the sonnet entitled " Lowther ":

> Hourly the democratic torrent swells;
> For airy promises and hopes suborned
> The strength of backward-looking thoughts is scorned.
> Fall if ye must, ye Towers and Pinnacles,
> With what ye symbolize; authentic Story
> Will say, Ye disappeared with England's Glory !

Nearly all the poems assigned to 1835 were called forth by the deaths or misfortunes of the poet's friends, the most noteworthy being the lines to Charles Lamb and those to the Ettrick Shepherd, already mentioned. He appears to have composed no verse, or very little, in 1836. In the following year his visit to Italy stirred him to considerable productiveness. Of the twenty-eight poems directly connected with the tour, the most valuable are certainly the "Musings near Aquapendente" and the six sonnets on Italian liberty with which the series closes. One sentence in the "Musings" came from a deep place in Wordsworth's experience. He had been realizing that his gift of poetic vision and of song was dwindling from disuse, and in self-reproach he said:

> Who would keep
> Power must resolve to cleave to it through life,
> Else it deserts him, surely as he lives.

In this piece the note of despondency is heard again; the times are said to be "vexed and disordered," science is reproached, and a plea is made for mystical faith. Much of what seems distinctive in the writings of Newman or most impressive in the works of Carlyle was already to be found in the last hundred lines of Wordsworth's poem. That he was aware of the effect they might produce, as being favourable to the Oxford Movement, and desired rather than deprecated that effect, is seen in the note composed by him conjointly with Frederick W. Faber. And in the Fenwick note he says of the Tractarian leaders: "Much of the work they are undertaking was grievously wanted, and may God grant their endeavours may continue to prosper as they have done."

Before he reached his sixty-eighth year, Wordsworth had won as much renown as it is possible for a lofty thinker and sincere artist to obtain from his own generation. Reprints and fresh editions of his works followed one another rapidly. He was widely read in Britain and America. His influence extended through all ranks of society. Many of his poems were recognized as English classics. The number of his lines which had

already become familiar quotations is astonishingly large. The principles of his art were still a matter of lively controversy, and he was acclaimed by men of quite opposite views as the champion of causes to which they were attached. In general, however, the tendency of his more recent work, and the well-known character of his later opinions made it impossible for the public to understand the meaning and purpose of his earlier poems. It was taken for granted that the same man had written "Lyrical Ballads" and "Ecclesiastical Sonnets." "The Prelude" was still unprinted. The existence of such a document as the Letter to Bishop Watson was not even suspected. Only a small and dwindling band of intimate friends could possibly interpret aright the works of his prime.

A picture of Wordsworth's life in the winter of 1838-39 will suffice for most of the years that followed. Crabb Robinson was making one of his long annual visits, which always cheered the entire household. Except when their sturdy neighbour Dr. Thomas Arnold was present, he tried to refrain from political and religious discussion with the poet, but as Dr. Arnold often joined the circle, the Oxford Movement was debated in the intervals of whist. The doctor did not like the "Oxford tract men," while Wordsworth was rather favourable to them. Miss Isabella Fenwick, a lady of fortune, about ten years younger than Mrs. Wordsworth and an ardent admirer of the poet and sympathizer with his present views of society, had taken a cottage at Ambleside about a mile from Rydal. He was wont to stride over to see her on dark rainy afternoons, to avoid the crowd of company at home—sometimes as many as twenty or thirty visitors in a day—and to read, or rather recite, portions of "The Prelude," which he was then once more revising, so as to leave it in a state fit for publication. Sir Henry Taylor, who was a family connexion of hers, says in his "Autobiography" that her influence over Wordsworth was at this time invaluable, because she persuaded him to consent to Dora's marriage, which he had for a long time passionately

opposed. Harriet Martineau, who also lived at Ambleside and was less disposed to worship the poet, said: "Wordsworth goes every day to Miss Fenwick, gives her a smacking kiss, and sits down before her fire to open his mind. Think what she could tell if she survives him! His conversation can never be anticipated. Sometimes he is annoying, from the pertinacity with which he dwells on trifles; at other times he flows on in the utmost grandeur, leaving a strong impression of inspiration." It was in 1843 that he dictated to Miss Fenwick those notes that are at once so valuable and so misleading. They are often incorrect, interpreting the poems of his early and middle years from the standpoint of an old man who half disapproves of what he then wrote. They consist largely of anecdotes connected with the places in which his poems were composed or the incidents that called them forth. Many of the dates are incorrectly given. In October, 1840, Miss Fenwick took up her residence with the Wordsworths at Rydal Mount.

Wordsworth's appearance at Oxford in the summer of 1839 to receive the degree of D.C.L. was the occasion of an enthusiastic reception. He was presented for the degree by the professor of poetry, the Rev. John Keble, whose address shows that the honour was given to Wordsworth with peculiar emphasis upon his character as a *religious* poet.

Of this occasion Dr. Arnold wrote:

"I went up to Oxford to the Commemoration for the first time for twenty-one years, to see Wordsworth and Bunsen receive their degrees; and to me, remembering how old Coleridge inoculated a little knot of us with the love of Wordsworth, when his name was in general a byword, it was striking to witness the thunders of applause, repeated over and over again, with which he was greeted in the theatre by undergraduates and Masters of Arts alike."

In April, 1841, the poet was in London for a short while, and later, with Miss Fenwick, Mrs. Wordsworth, his daughter, and his niece, he visited the south-west

of England. They went over the once to him familiar ground of the Wye Valley, and the scenes of many of his early poems, Goodrich Castle, Tintern, and Alfoxden. Poole had died September 8, 1837. Bristol and Bath were included in this tour, and in the latter city, on May 11, 1841, Dora Wordsworth and Edward Quillinan were married.

The last ten years of Wordsworth's life brought him honours and fame, but though his body retained its hard seasoned vigour, his intensely brooding mind fed upon vain fears, and also, it is true, substantial griefs. On his visits to London he became acquainted with many of the most eminent persons of that time, sitting, as Carlyle records, " with rock-like indifference to the babble," at dinner parties, his face bearing " marks of much, not always peaceful, meditation," his eyes showing " a quiet clearness "—" a right good old steel-grey figure, with a fine rustic simplicity and dignity about him, and a veracious *strength* looking through him." At home he was surrounded by a family group who loved and understood him, and by an outer circle of those whom Harriet Martineau described as his blue-stocking and clerical admirers, who regarded him as a combination of philosopher and saint, and manifestly did *not* understand him. To them we owe a burdensome debt for many anecdotes and pen-portraits which misrepresent him as poet and, I believe, as man. Several of the paintings and drawings of him in middle life and old age are atrocious. When compared with the true portraits by Nash and Pickersgill, they are clearly seen to be merely conventional, the artists' ideas of what a pious old gentleman, who was also a poet, should look like. Among the worst are those by Boxall, Haydon, and Margaret Gillies. They still figure as frontispieces in editions of his works, to the enjoyment of which they operate with deterrent force.

In 1842 he resigned the office of stamp distributor, thus losing more than half his income. The deficiency was nearly made up, however, by a pension of £300 on the Civil List. When Southey died, in 1843, Words-

worth was made Poet Laureate. He continued revising his works and occasionally composing new poems. Though lacking in charm, and often almost ridiculous because of their frightened reactionary tone, most of these are remarkable as evidences of unfailing artistic skill, stubborn strength of character, and intellectual energy.

The greatest affliction of his life fell upon him in 1847, when he lost his beloved daughter Dora. From this blow he never recovered. It broke his heart. He sank into a melancholy, distressing to those about him, from which he appeared to make no efforts to extricate himself.

Emerson, in " English Traits," describes Wordsworth as he saw him in March, 1848:

" His face sometimes lighted up, but his conversation was not marked by special force or elevation. Yet perhaps it is a high compliment to the cultivation of the English generally when we find such a man not distinguished. He had a healthy look, with a weather-beaten face, his face corrugated, especially the large nose. Miss Martineau, who lived near him, praised him to me not for his poetry, but for thrift and economy; for having afforded to his country neighbours an example of a modest household, where comfort and culture were secured without any display. She said that, in his early housekeeping at the cottage where he first lived, he was accustomed to offer his friends bread and plainest fare; if they wanted anything more, they must pay him for their board. It was the rule of the house. I replied that it evinced English pluck more than any anecdote I knew."

Admirable as such sense and courage are, it is only fair to say that the Wordsworths were always hospitable, up to and even beyond their means. Dove Cottage was at times so crowded that rooms had to be found outside for guests. And furthermore, as Dorothy once wrote to Mrs. Clarkson, in the midst of a grand upheaval at Allan Bank, William was " not expected to do anything." If Emerson's anecdote be true, the credit belongs to her

and Mrs. Wordsworth, even more than to the head of the family.

Emerson, like everybody else, found the aged poet craggy in his judgments. He said no Scotchman could write English. He thought Tennyson "a right poetic genius, though with some affectation"; which in 1848 was as much as could be said, and was bravely spoken.

On January 6, 1849, Hartley Coleridge died. Robinson truly said, and the testimony of persons still living confirms his words, "Everybody in the valley pitied and loved him." His father's venerable friend braved the inclemency of the season to stand beside his open grave.

Writing to Miss Fenwick, who was no longer at Rydal Mount, Robinson gives an account of his visit:

"I found Mr. Wordsworth more calm and composed than I expected. Whatever his feelings may be, he appears to have them under control. I feared that the visit to the churchyard last Tuesday with Mr. Coleridge [Derwent], to fix the spot where Hartley might be interred, would overset him; but, on the contrary, I returned with him alone, and he talked with perfect self-possession. Dear Mrs. Wordsworth is what she always was: I see no change on her, but that the wrinkles of her careworn countenance are somewhat deeper. Poor Miss Wordsworth, I thought sunk still further in insensibility. By-the-by, Mrs. Wordsworth says that almost the only enjoyment Wordsworth seems to feel is in his attendance on her, and that her death would be to him a sad calamity."

Quillinan wrote to Robinson, October 14, 1849:

"You will find your old and faithful friend, the poet, pretty much as he was on your last visit. The same social cheerfulness—company cheerfulness—the same fixed despondency, uncorrected. I esteem him for both; I love him best for the latter.

In the summer of 1849 Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth made the last of their many journeys together, going to visit her brother Thomas at West Malvern. In this year and the next appeared a six-volume edition of the Poems, embodying Wordsworth's own final revision,

which had cost him much labour, some of it not well spent; for his later corrections were often unfortunate.

In a letter dated April 12, 1850, Robinson writes: "The accounts from Rydal are alarming. I fear that the great poet is approaching to what will be the commencement of his fame." Up to March 12 Wordsworth had continued in good health, but on that date he took a cold, which developed into an inflammation of the pleura and the bronchial tubes. By the 20th his illness was recognized as very serious. On Sunday, April 7, his eightieth birthday, prayers were offered for him in Rydal Chapel. On Saturday, April 20, he received the Communion at the hands of his son John. His nephew, in the "Memoirs," records an incident touching in its naturalness: "On or about this day, Mrs. Wordsworth, with a view of letting him know what the opinion of his medical advisers was concerning his case, said gently to him: 'William, you are going to Dora.' He made no reply at the time, and the words seemed to have passed unheeded; indeed, it was not certain that they had ever been heard. More than twenty-four hours afterwards one of his nieces came into the room, and was drawing aside the curtain of his chamber, and then, as if awakening from a quiet sleep, he said, 'Is that Dora?'" While the clock was striking the hour of noon, on Tuesday, April 23, 1850, he passed calmly away.

I once heard from the lips of Miss Arnold, of Fox How, an account of that morning. "My younger sister and I," she said, "went up on the terrace of Loughrigg, and watched the windows of Rydal Mount opposite; and when the curtains were drawn down we knew Wordsworth was dead." She was one of the large number of friends and neighbours who attended the funeral, which was on Saturday, the 27th. The body was laid to rest beside the Rothay, in Grasmere churchyard.

Dorothy Wordsworth and Mrs. Wordsworth spent their remaining years at Rydal Mount, the former never recovering her mental health, the latter strong and serene to the last. Dorothy died January 25, 1855, and

Mrs. Wordsworth, January 17, 1859. Their bodies lie in the same corner of Grasmere churchyard with those of their brother and husband and of Dora Quillinan, Hartley Coleridge, the two children Thomas and Catherine, and Sara Hutchinson. There, too, stands a stone in memory of the sailor brother John.

Wordsworth's fame spread slowly during his lifetime. Since his death it has increased with sound and constant growth. His appreciative readers were confined at first to the small circle of persons who knew him or were acquainted with his purposes. Upon them the force of his character operated almost as much as the charm of his poetry. Then the best lovers of literature in the English-speaking world began to appreciate the exalted quality of his verse and the fineness of his feeling; many of the strongest minds, statesmen, philosophers, men of science, perceived and valued the truth of his report about nature and the human heart; influential critics proclaimed him the greatest poet of his age, great in the purity and elevation of his work, and no less in the peculiarly poetic view which he took of the world.

For a time this last quality of his writings was the most generally understood. Men spoke of the Wordsworthian attitude, the Wordsworthian conception of nature, and his many-sidedness was not sufficiently acknowledged. But as "The Prelude" became better known, and after the "Fragment of the Recluse" appeared, unexpected depths were revealed, his intellectual complexity and power were more fully realized, and he was thought of as something more than the simple poet of quiet nature.

His unique position as interpreting, through personal experience, one of the most tremendous political changes in history has only begun to be recognized. The French Revolution itself is coming to be more sympathetically understood, and Wordsworth's attitude to the Revolution is seen in a truer light.

During the Great War English-speaking people

throughout the world turned to him more than to any other poet for the quiet power that overcomes evil, for encouragement, and for respite from the strain and agony. Statesmen strengthened their hearts to bear the burdens of each day by repeating the high counsels of his patriotic sonnets; and men and women who were risking or giving all at the bidding of Duty uttered his words:

> Stern Lawgiver, yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know we anything so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face.

That Wordsworth gives serenity to those who love him is true, but he never found the way to peace himself. His soul was never at rest. He was always consumed with passionate joy or passionate distress. He will be venerated for the honesty of his work and the height of his ideals as long as our English tongue endures. He dealt seriously with poetry, honouring himself and humankind.

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